

VOL.1. NO. 5

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1992

RS.9

THE
eye

A WRITTEN
MOVEMENT
WORD

TRIBALS OF CHOTANAGPUR



● CELEBRATION OF LIFE ● CRISIS IN CHOTANAGPUR ●
MALLIKARJUN MANSOOR



RED OCHRE

Red (rakta) has been recorded as a primary or pure colour (shuddhavarṇa) since ancient times in India. Of the various shades of red, red ochre, gairika or geru has been extensively used in this country. It is a colour of and from the earth, freely available and easily prepared for application. It is literally a household colour used on floors, walls, thresholds and just about anywhere. Its presence in the palette of the Indian painter may be noted to be an invariable feature for both murals (bhittichitra) and miniature paintings.

Iron oxides are called 'ochres' which may vary from dull yellow to red and brown. The finer varieties are used for painting while the coarser ones are for decorating purposes. The difference between the red and brown shades in this ochre is difficult to define, inextricably woven as they are. The *Silparatna* enjoins that red clay, gairika, should be pulverised on stone for one day and the colour can then be obtained by washing it in water. This red ochre is used to get a middle red shade, madhyarakta.

Red ochre is used in oil painting grounds owing to its quick drying properties and low oil absorption. It is an extremely durable colour capable of being used with both water and oil mediums.

Red ochre is frequently mentioned under one name or another in English texts. 'Bole' is a word which appears occasionally as a synonym for red ochre which was much used as a constituent in gold size. Other red ochres are Indian Red and Venetian Red.

-Anupam Sah-
Final Year Student of Conservation,
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BOOK REVIEW



Dear Editor,

I started reading CONSUMING THE FUTURE (THE EYE, VOL.1 NO.2) quite indifferently, but by the time I finished reading it in a single sitting, I was very impressed. Quite simply, it is the most readable, thought provoking magazine I have read in recent times. The west has reached a dead end and any magazine which helps to influence our younger generation to stop driving down suicide lane is doing something very valuable.

"What is truth?" asked jesting Pilate and would not stay for an answer. Had he asked Hollywood and Madison Avenue he would have been told, "Truth is whatever is convenient, pleasant and socially acceptable". The solitary edict erected and mindlessly protected by the law makers of the twentieth century requires that everything must henceforth be made small, petty and inconsequential.

The anti-establishment symbols of the 60's have become the middle-aged and successful establishment of the 80's. The vision has faded, the drugs have taken their toll, the revolutionaries have either grown old or passed away. Material prosperity and social success have resumed their officially sanctioned position as the pot at the end of the rainbow. We are in the era of choices: individual and personal. Who needs God and philosophy when there is a choice between Coke and Pepsi?

"Was America really the death continent, the great No! to the European, Asiatic and the African?" wondered a D.H. Lawrence protagonist. Did Edgar Allen Poe, one of America's best poets write a requiem for his nation in his *The Fall of the House Of Usher*:

*But evil things in robes of sorrow,
Assailed the monarch's high morrow
Shall dawn upon him desolate!*

*And round about his home, the glory
That blushed and bloomed
Is but a dim remembered story
Of the old times entombed.*

*And travellers now within the valley
Through the red-litten windows see
Vast forms that move fantastically
To a discordant melody;*

*While, like a ghastly river
Through the pale door
A hideous throng rush out forever
And laugh-but smile no more.*

Ajay Bhatia
124, Shivalik Enclave
Nal, Manimajra
Chandigarh.

"I assert that the cosmic religious experience is the strongest and noblest driving force behind scientific research. The most beautiful and profound emotion we can experience is the mystical. It is the source of all true art and science. This insight into the mystery of life has given rise to religion. To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiating beauty, this knowledge, this feeling is at the centre of true religion. In this sense and in this sense only, I belong to the ranks of religious men."

EINSTEIN

Dear Reader,

We need more letters from you! THE EYE invites your reactions, comments, suggestions, criticisms and opinions. This written-word-movement will cease to be one without your response. Well written, interesting and thought provoking letters will be published. Send them in to THE EYE, 39, Anand Lok, New Delhi-110049.



When Bulu Imam met us early this year, we discussed the possibility of an issue on Chotanagpur. Bulu, as we have known him, is not only impassioned about the region he comes from, but was prepared to be our Guest Editor. Naturally, we were more than happy to welcome him to our written -word -movement .

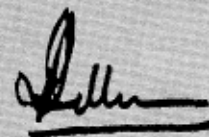
Chotanagpur, very special because of the large number of indigenous people who have lived there for centuries, is in the midst of great exploitative change. This change threatens to dilute, distort or decimate its age old cultures, life-styles and value systems. To that extent it becomes our concern to try and understand the land and her people and to define a role for ourselves as arrestors of negative change.

In the span of one issue, it is impossible to cover all aspects of the region, leave alone in very great depth. However, we have made attempts to look at some of its politico-socio-economic dynamics, art forms, rituals, myth, oral traditions and other cultural practices.

What is so wonderful about the tribal world is its inextricable linkage to myth, fantastic and imaginative. This myth guides the tribal psyche, giving him insights into his origins and evolution and the broader questions of his existence. It befits our reader, therefore, to willingly suspend disbelief.

It is time to examine whether, in the name of today's dominant world view of development, we have the right to take away his myth and contentment and plunge him into a world of economic uniformity. Or to evolve a cultural policy without reassessing the goal of 'progress'.

We are grateful to our tribal brethren of Chotanagpur who taught us so much as we put this issue together. We dedicate this issue to them.



*'Adivasi' the name refers to a "beginning".
It belongs to a people who claim a home in India long
before the Dravidian and Aryan moved towards the
subcontinent. They are truly the first inhabitants, the
people from the "beginning" the "adivasi".'*

The oneness of tribals with nature, their moods and sensualism, has been the subject matter of poetry and philosophy. Chotanagpur epitomizes that appeal. The simple tribals of this countryside, once rich with forests and now virtually all but destroyed by mining... of coal, mica, iron ore, forests, and water resources... are the guardians of man's real nature which is a coming from and not a going to. In today's haste and materialism what is termed 'environment' is the creation of an economy alien to nature. In this panorama, the tribals offer us a glimpse of what evolution is really all about, and man's proper role in that evolution, and his relationship to nature as a result. The tribals' deepest beliefs are expressed simply, not simplistically, being the product of a great refinement of only essentials. That is why the tribals enjoy life, love living, fear God, worship the principle of social harmony, and maintain peace amongst themselves. This is natural of a people who believe in the supernatural essence being according to a design, and that this life, this design, this principle, shall not at any cost be violated. Their legends and folklore are an expression of a genius that understands the function of myth as neither explanatory nor symbolic, but as the statement of an extraordinary event, the occurrence of which had, once and for all established the social order of the tribe, its economy, and relationships. The evolutionary genius of traditional myth is expressed in the continuity of oral traditions amidst the havoc of modern industrialization. The sacred groves or sarnas of Chotanagpur are more than places of worship today: they are the symbols of hope that man's developmental destruction may not consume the very earth itself, for which we believe, religion had been created by Singbonga.

Bulu Imam

Sarna

When Munda settlers first set out from their parent village to found a new habitation for themselves in a forested area, they were accustomed to fell the trees to make room for their fields of rice and pulse. They did not fell all the trees. An uneven number of tall trees were left standing to serve as a sacred grove which was a place of worship.

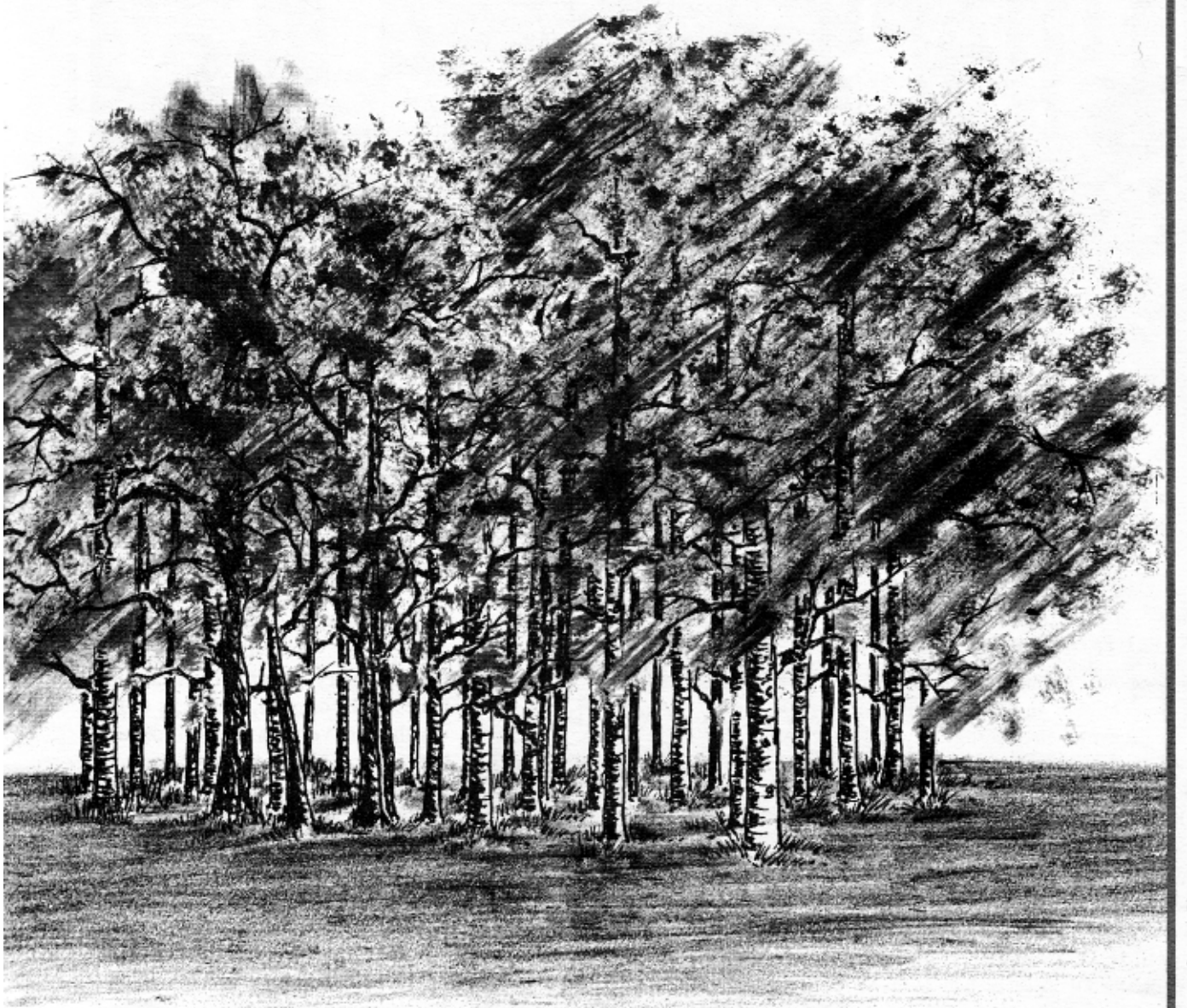


Illustration : Oroon Kumar



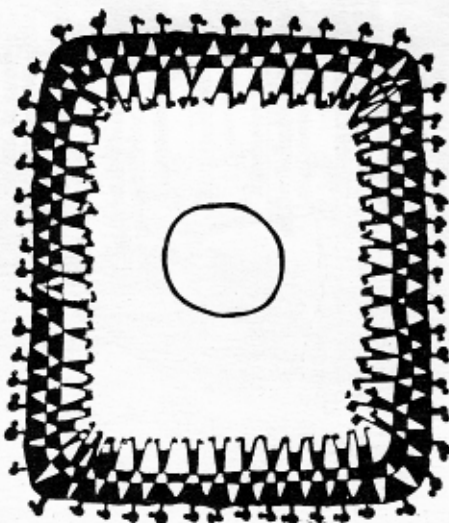
A Toda domed wooden hut with a roof of grass thatch.

RETHINKING TRIBAL TRADITION

BAIDYANATH SARASWATI

THE DARKNESS OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The understanding of man and culture in terms of human evolution is a historically critical one in western ideological tradition. The Bible proclaims the orthodoxy of the notion that the old religious patterns are subject to evolutionary change. A more explicit theory emerged during that epoch in western culture known as 'enlightenment'. The rationalists of this age (17-18th Century) claimed that just as man evolved biologically from the lower primates to the higher homo sapiens, so has culture developed from a lower to a higher



stage in a universal sequence of savagery, barbarism and finally civilisation. Contemporary human groups carrying traces of the original conditions of life are the last vestiges of savagery and barbarism. This theory gave rise to a disgraceful generalisation that races of people are different in their innate equipment for culture building and hence cultures are graded qualitatively in their sequence of unilinear development. The so called savage, primitive or tribal group was defined as a single biological type, with its own cast or character and deemed to be uncritical of mind. Further, they lived in a state of homogeneity, patterned their lives

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conventionally, were strongly ethnocentric etc.

The subtlety of the explanation is that *tribe* in relation to modern society is a separate section of humanity. The challenge to 'enlightenment' comes from within the belief itself. That is, from its own definition of progress and perfection in terms of a natural process from simple to complex, unorganised to organised, from something that was lesser to what was better. This claim is at variance with the existing geological evidence of some simple looking globigerine forms giving rise to more complex plexus at different periods in geological history and then eventually disappearing with the slightest ecological imbalance. Could this evidence be taken as the second law of evolution? If so, then the future of the human species having developed a complex form, both biological and cultural, is endangered.

The darkness of the enlightenment deepens further by the technocratic view of the world that has lead mankind to catastrophic ambitions, now too manifest to be ignored.

AN INVITATION TO NEW WAYS.

The challenge to western rationalism can be couched in a question. What is the logical justification of considering a particular viewpoint infallible and intrinsically universal and all other views as parochial, precultural and prescientific? Obviously there is a need to open up new ways of looking at man and culture.

TERMINOLOGICAL CLARIFICATION.

Let me first clarify the terms to which I have given a special meaning.

Perfect Form: A self-generating, self-organising, self-sustaining and self-perpetuating critical mass coherent with the environment.

Selection: A process by which choice is made as a factor of cultural preference of the following types:

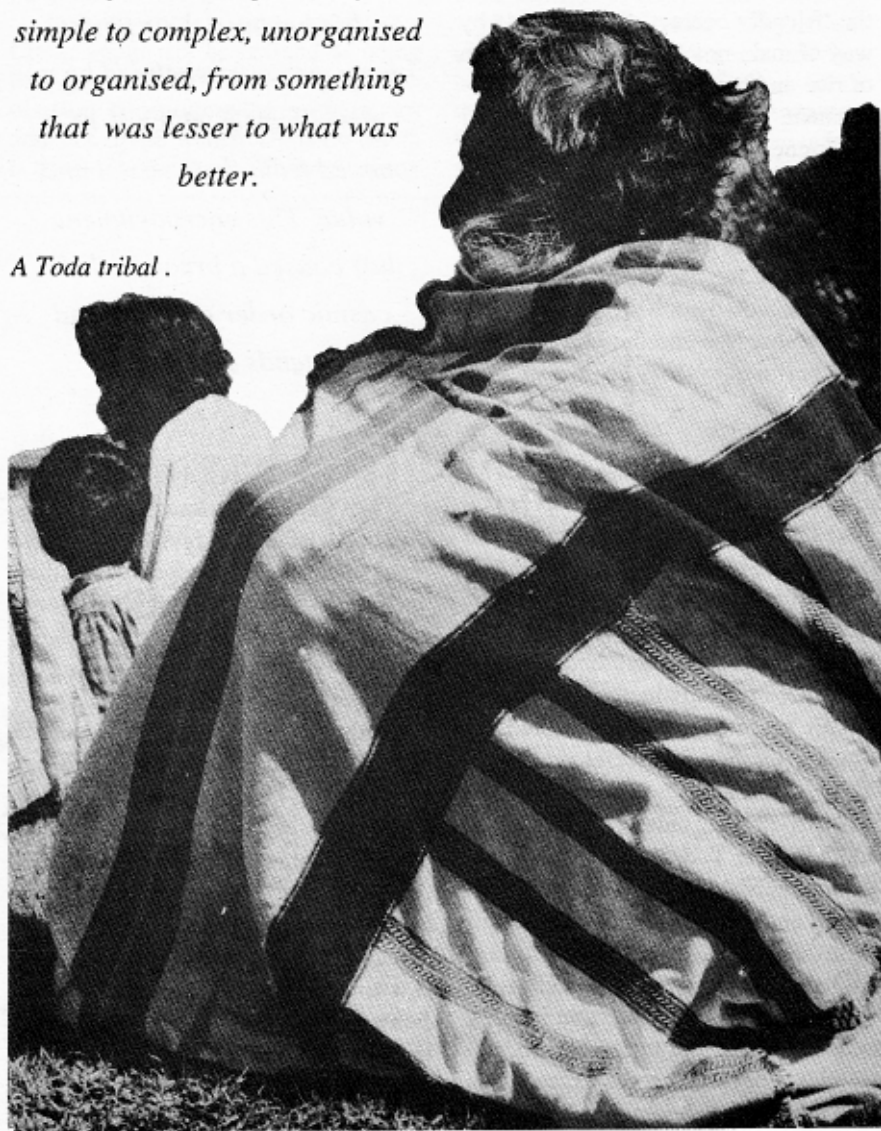
a) **Natural Selection** in conformity

with the signs of physical nature as read or understood on the basis of inner beliefs and experiences. This is contrary to the use of the term in biology as a factor in evolution. Here, *Man* is the selector.

b) **Utilitarian Selection** determined by usefulness in promoting collective good.

The challenge to 'enlightenment' comes from within the belief itself. That is, from its own definition of progress and perfection in terms of a natural process from simple to complex, unorganised to organised, from something that was lesser to what was better.

A Toda tribal.



Village India by Stephen P. Hayler

c) **Transcendental Selection** made intuitively or through divination, adhering to the belief that the spiritual is above the temporal.

d) **Technocratic Selection** on the consideration of personalistic use of materialistic goods.

Mirage Republic: a phenomenon of the shadow mind that gives a sense of freedom without substance.

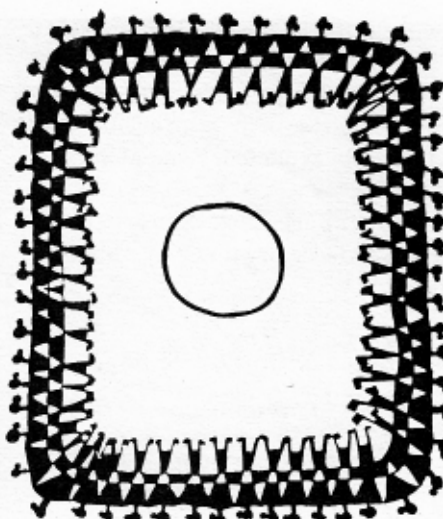
FOUR POSTULATES.

The postulates presented here are based largely on secondary data and personal observation:

1) The closer the identification with the macrocosm, the greater the perfectibility of form. The Sentinelese and the Jarawa of the Andaman Islands are the

best examples of tribal 'perfect form'. They have identified themselves completely with the nature of the tropical island. Because of their self-approved isolation, there is little definitive account of their lives. Though they are a small population, they seem capable of biological perpetuation over several generations. They are highly reserved, having sparse interaction with each other. Their cultural needs, derived from and conditioned by changing ecological phenomena are fulfilled through fourfold creative agencies, namely, object, action, organisation and knowledge. Choice is made by 'natural' and 'utilitarian' selections. Recently, the Jarawa of South and Middle Andaman have begun to respond marginally to the 'friendly contact' from outside by way of making a 'utilitarian' selection of rice and banana gifts from the government. This in no way indicates their willingness to be governed; on the contrary, they maintain a hostile stance. Independence through hostility has been the practice of the Sentinel islanders as well since the Britisher's consistent effort to woo them with gifts of metal. The Sentinelese and the Jarawa maintain their *imperium et liberatas* to this day.

2) The higher the 'selection', the more perfect the rhythm of life. An example will best illustrate this postulate. The pastoral, polyandrous Todas live on the high massif of the Nilgiri Hills with four other groups, the Kota, the Kurumba, the Irula and the Badaga. Each group is autonomous and content with its distinctive life pursuit and are yet intrinsically interlinked in a ritual, economic and social symbiosis. They are culturally self-sustaining and self-perpetuating only in relation to one another. The Todas satisfy their biocultural needs through 'natural', 'utilitarian' and 'transcendental' selections. With the Badagas they make an utilitarian selection of foodstuffs and grain; with the Kotas, Kurumbas and Irulas, both utilitarian and transcendental selections. For instance, the Kotas play a vital role in the economic and ritual life



The Ongees of Little Andaman have lost interest in life because their perfect form was overwhelmed by a new lifestyle which is removed from their vision and value. This encroachment has caused a break in their cosmic order of space and portends destruction.

of the Todas, by supplying them with many of the necessities of life, including pottery, axes, knives, jewellery, music for funeral rites, funereal clothes and meals. The Kurumbas, in their turn, provide the Todas with jungle products like honey, bamboo, and even recite incantations to pregnant Toda women. From the Irulas they get a special kind of bamboo flute, their only musical instrument. The uniqueness of this Nilgiri 'group of five' is that each of them maintains an extreme distinctiveness, fostered by separate settlements and different languages, with also their own temple complexes and priest craft. But unlike the Sentinelese and the Jarawas, these groups are not culturally independent. In fact, they constitute a cultural whole, not subject to the decrees of an alien culture. They are the

high priests of the sanctum sanctorum of the tribal cultural complex.

In terms of musical cosmology, the Todas have a polyrhythmic culture; the Sentinelese and the Jarawa are obviously monorhythmic.

3) The quicker the destruction of a perfect form, the faster the loss of life. When a self-willing and self-thinking culture loses its autonomy 'perfect form' is destroyed. The Ongees of Little Andaman have lost interest in life because their perfect form was overwhelmed by a new lifestyle which is removed from their vision and value. This encroachment has caused a break in their cosmic order of space and portends destruction. The number of Ongees has gone down to 112, about a sixth of their number seventy five years ago. Their present birth rate is below the replacement level.

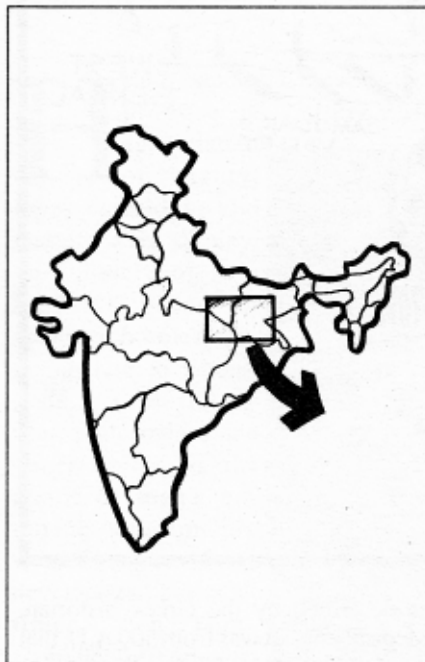
4) The tighter the hold of technology, the deeper the human tragedy. The tribes making the 'technocentric selection' are a worthwhile example. In the North East, tribal states have been formed and they follow the imperatives of modernisation. But their cultural identity has all but disappeared. Ironically, the panacea of this identity crisis is believed to lie in 'modernism' itself. It makes a bid, albeit frantic, to preserve and revitalise tradition through 'technocentric selection'. Finally, the question is, do we, in absolute terms, enjoy cultural freedom or have we created a mirage republic?

Dr.B.N.Saraswati is an authority on cosmology, religion, pottery and tribal thought and culture. He was formerly Professor of Anthropology at North Eastern Hill University, Shillong. A few of his major publications include, Kashi-Myth and Reality and The Sacred Science Of Man. He is currently Research Professor at The Indira Gandhi National Centre For the Arts, New Delhi.

The name, *Chotanagpur*, is derived from a small Mundari village ten kilometres west of what is now Ranchi. The plateaux of Hazaribagh and Ranchi in South Bihar form the two halves of the Chotanagpur plateau. The Jharkhand region, much referred to these days, is

A PROFILE OF CHOTANAGPUR

BULU IMAM

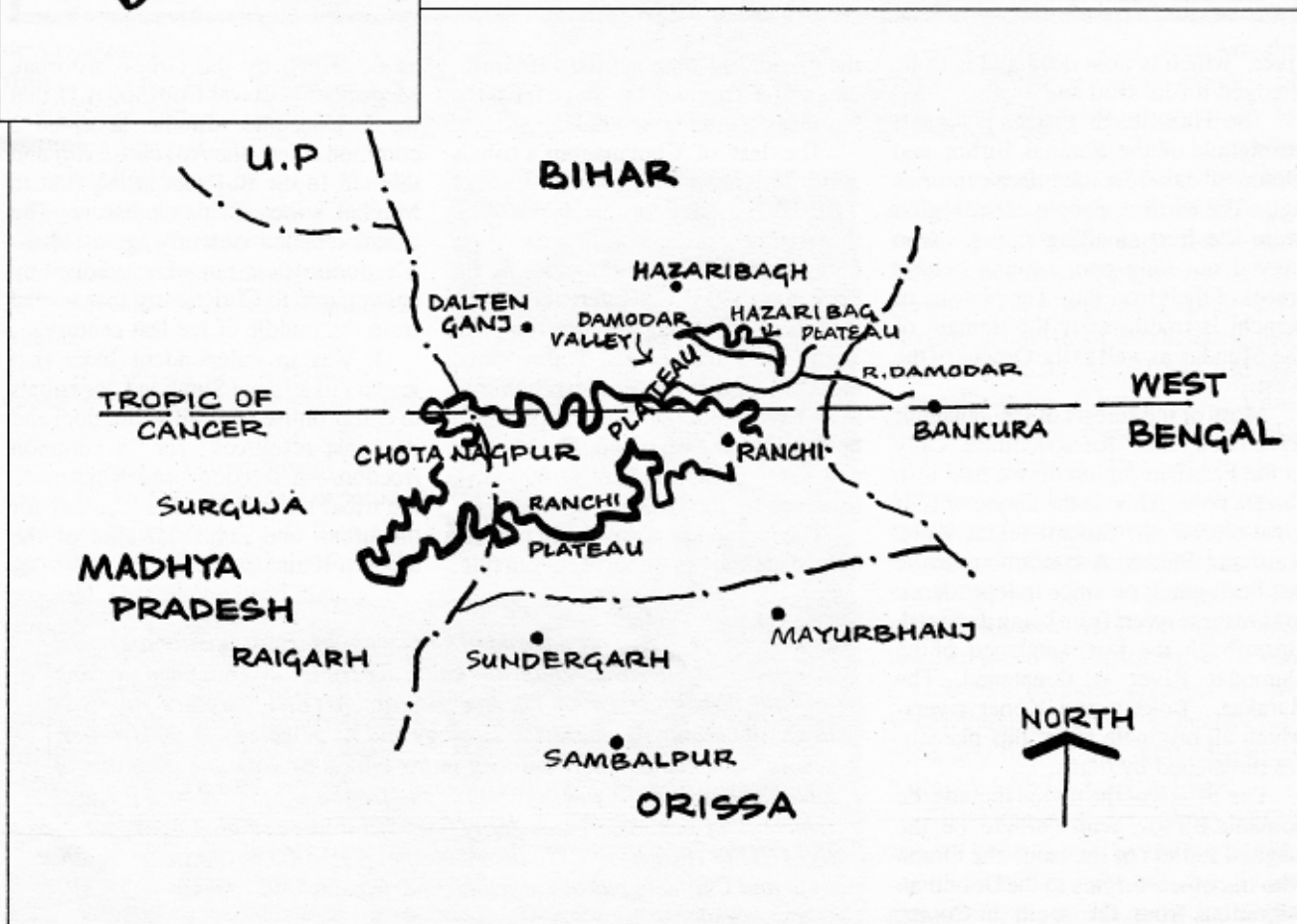


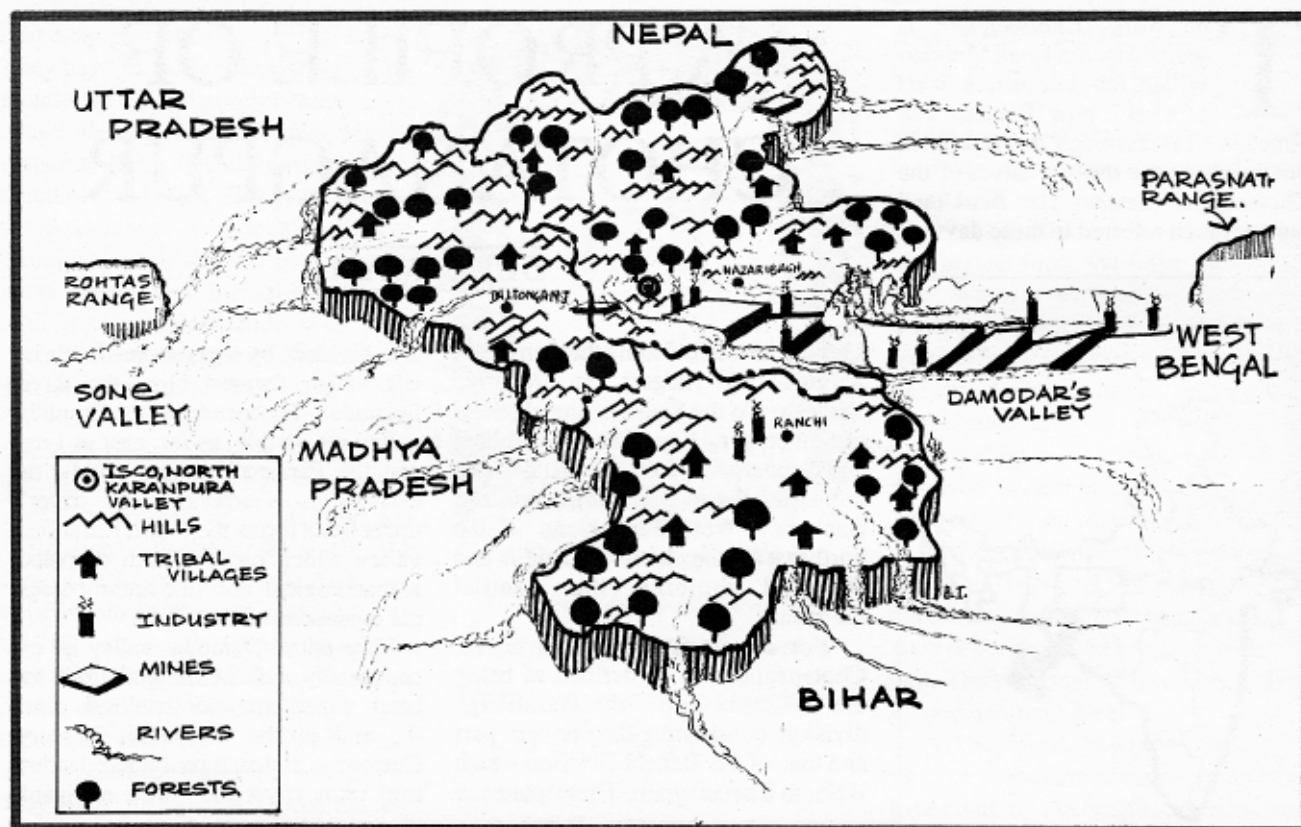
a larger canvas including the districts of Sarguja and Raigarh in Madhya Pradesh. To the South lie the districts of Sambalpur, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj and Sundergarh in Orissa. To the east are the district of Midnapore and Bankura in West Bengal; and in the northeast are the plains of Giridih and Dhanbad adjoining the Santhal Parganas.

For all intents and purposes, Chotanagpur can be defined as being the plateaux of the Hazaribagh division constituting the northern part and that of the Ranchi Division which is South Chotanagpur. These plateaux

are divided by a great pre-Cambrian rift valley formed by the River Damodar. The facades of the Damodar valley are visible as far east as Lugu and the Parasnath ranges amidst the easternmost Vindhya. The river's upper basin forms the North Karanpura valley which has a wealth of paleo-archaeological and rare anthropological evidences of early man.

The entire Damodar valley is exceptionally rich in minerals and has been mined and industrialised since the end of the nineteenth century. Currently, almost three hundred industrial units flank the once navigable





river, which is now dead and is to be dredged for its sand and coal.

The Hazaribagh plateau is the last stronghold of the Santhal, Birhor and Oraon tribes who settled here centuries ago. The earliest people of the region were the iron smelting Asurs, who moved out long ago, leaving behind traces of their iron slag. The plateau of Ranchi is traditionally the domain of the Mundas as well as the Oraons of the west.

Most of the forests of Chotanagpur have been razed for agriculture. Only in the Palamau region do we find lush forests now. This is the abode of four great rivers, the Suvamarekha, Koel, Karo and Sunkh. A continuous battle has been going on since independence to save these rivers from being dammed. Hazaribagh, the last watershed of the Damodar River is threatened. The Barakar, Bokaro and Konar rivers—which all originate from this plateau—are threatened by dams.

The tribals of the region include the nomadic Birhor, who claim to be the original settlers of the land; the Oraon who trace their origins to the Dravidian migrations from far south in Coorg;

the Munda, a Kolarian tribe with influences of a Turanian language from the Northeast; and the Santhals.

The last of Chotanagpur's tribals and forests are presented in this issue of THE EYE as they appear for, possibly, the last time. Jarasandha, the great Asura king ruled this forest kingdom as far back as 1500 B.C. References to the Asurs of Chotanagpur are found in Vedic and Puranic texts. Today, stone tools tell us that the earliest hominid may have made its first appearance here millions of years ago. The Mundas and Santhals settled here in 600 B.C. followed by the Oraons.

The region has always been fiercely independent even under Mauryan rule,

as described by the Greek historian, Megasthenes. It was from 500 A.D. that the Oraons and Mundas accepted a common ruler, the *Nagbansh Raj* and this led to the Raj submitting first to Mughal, then British pressure. The tribals rebelled violently against British domination but were subdued by conversion to Christianity that started from the middle of the last century.

It was in independent India that leaders like Jaipal Singh led the tribals to compromise their hilly kingdom and its vast resources for a common freedom—a 'freedom' which has made the tribal today a bonded labourer for the urban and industrial elite of the modern Indian state.

Bulu Imam is first of all a friend of Chotanagpur. He is passionate about its wonderful natural, spiritual and cultural heritage and has been working towards their preservation for several years. Art and literature gave way to an all consuming interest in Ecology and Archaeology. Bulu is writer, scholar and campaigner, untiring in his efforts to draw the attention of governments and the public towards the fragile ecological and cultural remnants of this once bountiful region. He is the regional convener of INTACH in Hazaribagh. He also convenes CHIPKO in the same region. Bulu and Chotanagpur are together—inextricable, indivisible.

THE TRIBALS OF CHOTANAGPUR

A BROAD OVERVIEW

Health, happiness, security, the produce of culture, an appreciation of beauty, love, emotions, and mastery over destiny, on a lonely or in a limitless ocean of unknown, hostile space, giving rise to taboos, gods, propitiatory rites, philosophies and uncertainties, is the result of man's enduring relationship with Nature. Man's development has at all times been slow, ecologically complex, in tune with Nature, provider of all things for his existence: religion, arts, food. Man was never a pitiable object in traditional societies until economy and industry created a class society based upon material wealth.

There is an apparent dichotomy between industrial development and the protection of a safe, clean, well-forested, clean-aired environment having stable, fertile soils, and stores of natural medicine primitive societies have also learned to use. Today, the problem is two-fold. On the one hand, natural renewable and non-renewable bases (i.e. forests, coals, oil, etc.) are being destroyed, producing solid wastes, effluents, and gases, which threaten the atmosphere, create deserts, and promise within 50 years, a world without clean water, breathing air, or fertile soils. Modern industry, which consumes enormous natural resources, systematically destroys long term bio-spheric

BULU IMAM

sustainability, creating genocide in the future of our grandchildren.

As laid down in the ancient texts of India, the principal aims of life, which undoubtedly left its impression on the proto-Aryan tribals of the Indus civilization were, *dharma* (responsibility); *artha* (wealth); *kama* (pleasure) and *moksha* (freedom from attachment).

In Indian Art, the *bhargas* (adoption of posture), common by the 2nd Century

AD, explored states of poise, counter-poise, and equilibrium (*samabhanga*, *tribhanga*, *abhanga* and *ati-bhanga*). Life was expressed through *rasas*, flavours, or atmospheres. The environmentalism of the ancient world, while ecologically sound, was also aesthetically stable. Inherent in the tribal system of values, these *rasas* formed a basis for love, ritual, lore and life itself. The space of human appreciation of existence overrode mere material excellence or possessions. This, then, is the presiding esoteric genius of the tribal phenomenon in its pristine, undiluted perspective. These *rasas* reviewed the central, cardinal precepts of life within the simple format of man's existence, and formed a natural ecological harmony with his surroundings.

The more precious colours of the ancient Indian would have been simple, except for perhaps, the lapis lazuli blue gemstone pigments of Ajanta. In



Above: A young Birhor nomad woman making wispy, nest-like Kumba from twigs, branches and the leaves of the Sal tree.

Below: Oraon child carrying a goat kid.

Chotanagpur, mineral red, grey, coloured clay, the whites of kaolin or lime, black from coal or soot, have sufficed. Munda, Oraon, Ho, Kharia, Santhal, Birhor, Asur, and smaller tribes out of these evolved the heritage of our plateau. Even today, on the lime-washed walls or a government housing colony for Birhors, the art of little Birhor children vie with the pictographs of Warli.

In India, at the time of the Aryan invasion of the Indus, the presence of several Dravidian tribes or proto-historic pre-Dravidian types were present—Brahui and Oraon, leaving behind a spoken tongue in the North. Several agricultural instruments which are mentioned in Vedic literature, such as *langala*, or *hals* (plough) and *kudala* (spade) are of a Mundari etymological origin.

At the time of the appearance of the Dravidians, (perhaps Libyans, a Mediterranean race originally) we find the presence of Negrite and Kolarian tribes inhabiting India already. It was from these early migrants of Dravidians from the Deccan, and the Kolarian tribes of Chotanagpur, that the present tribal population of the region was born.

The values of these people, living amidst lush forests, based upon traditional Man-Nature relationships, lasted centuries through oral traditions. The breakdown of these values was the result of being stripped off their forests and lands by a Raja and the subsequent *jagirdari* system set up by them, and then the status of tax-payer to Mughal and British Crowns. As a result, the value system of the tribals eroded as they tried to become identified increasingly with their exploiters. Here, the Christian Church played a major role playing a part as benefactor of tribal interests.

Since the mid 1850's when the Gossner Evangelical Lutheran (G.E.L.) Church first laid its foundations in Ranchi, followed soon by the Anglican and Belgian Jesuit Roman Catholic Missions, the fabric of the tribal culture of Chotanagpur was altered by the western value system. We have heard talk of



"The Tribal Church" but in reality it never existed. As a result of the value system, imparted through the Church, tribal value systems were pushed into the background. Perhaps this, more than any other single factor, has led to the breakdown of tribal culture in Chotanagpur. Elwin, who gave the guardianship of his sons to a Jesuit in Chotanagpur (Victor Rosner S.J.) was himself conversant with these facts while advising Nehru in the framing of India's Tribal Policy. However, facts override philosophies, and the fact is that the eroding of time-bound cultural bases would unfailingly mar the man-nature relationships between tribals and their environment in Chotanagpur.

The Tribals revolted rightly against the British usurpation of traditional lands but in the freedom struggle, sided with the Indian National Congress and when India became an independent republic, lost all control over their lands and forests to the State, either through Reserved Forests, *zemindary* abolition, or by lack of properly documented titles of possession, all settlement awards having been proved biased, unjust, and inadequate, ever since the British days (Ricketts Awards 1910 etc.)

Today the demand for getting back these old lands and forests, and regional autonomy through the Jharkhand

Above: Birhor boys in front of wall drawings.

The values of these people, living amidst lush forests, based upon traditional Man-Nature relationships, lasted centuries through oral traditions.

Movement, includes the long-resident non-tribals who are historically associated with the tribals of the Chotanagpur region.

I have earlier alluded to the natural life-styles of ecological imperatives in traditional societies. Ecology is the harmonious relationship of man with natural systems. The Oraons, the dominant tribe of the plateau, came here many centuries back, nobody is exactly sure when. They may be held responsible for clearing much of the region's forests for agricultural purposes. The Mundas, who lived here before the Dravidian migrants, were driven back to the *parha* of Ranchi, today the headquarters of the South Chotanagpur Division.

The Oraons set up *chuas* or springs

beside the *patras* or small Sal forests, maintaining a quiet, peaceful, rural equilibrium which was a natural, civilization response in this tribal heartland. Every variety of indigenous tree grew here, flowering, fruiting, and multiplying. The soaring Sal, today only found in isolated *sarnas*, the exotic *mahua* whose fruits yield oil, flour, and wine, the gay *gambhar* from which ploughshares are made, the sacred *karam* object of devout worship, each existed in its wild, natural state. Into this scene of Nature's abandon replete with shallow rivers and waterfalls and myriad kinds of wild-birds and animals, entered civilization.

The soil of this stony plateau was never very good, perhaps eroded long before the Oraons came. But these good farmers graded and managed it, creating the most fertile table land imaginable. Rice and cereals such as *gondli* were staple foods, while the forests, yielded spinach, yams and tubers. The place-cult of these people is unique. Like all place-cults, it led naturally to animism, witchcraft, magic and a surreal identity and independence within the tribe itself.

These people naturally, felt no shame in baring their bodies. They took natural pride in adornment, weaving necklaces from long strands of *kasi grass* or placing of flowers in their long hair by both women and men. Their pastimes were equally harmless—repairing tiled roofs in the summer, catching fish with nets or baskets and making new rice-fields. These aspects of their simple, happy lives are the subject of their songs. Love was the crowning glory of such simple joys. Old *bhuinhari* families (or *Khunt-Kattidars*, the original tree clearers) revered jungles, not merely as objects of taboo or, because it was home for their gods, but primarily as places of peace, plenty and joy. When they cleared any part it was done after due sacrifices to residing spirits, the *Khunt Bhuts*.

Terracing and bunding are the two most important features of managing a watershed, and the Oraons were ex-

perts in this. It controls run-off and consequently erosion. Many Santhal and Oraon songs tell us of repairing these "bunds" with the *kudali*. Even now nobody can teach an Oraon farmer water harvesting. Traditionally, these people divide their lands into grades even as a soil scientist does today, layer by layer, like icing on a cake, growing different varieties of crops on each level. They maintained trees on these bunds to hold the soil.

As the Anglican and G.E.L. Churches claimed the bulk of the Munda tribals, so the Catholic Church converted the Oraons and later the Santhals. It was a question as to who could better fit the 'native' into the format of Nehru's

dream of highly technocratic, industrialized and "civilized" Indian society. Thus, in the fifties we saw a campaign to recreate the tribal in the true westernized mould, an incalculable error, and the ruins of that society are with us today in very nook and cranny, in every *tola* and *parha* of Christian Chotanagpur.

The National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) prepared a report, *A Perspective Plan (1979-89) for Integrated Tribal Development*. They observed: "Adivasis by nature, are contented persons and their needs are very limited. This sort of contentment has kept them away from earning more to fulfil their needs. By nature



Above: Birhor tribals braiding fibres.

Traditionally, these people divide their lands into grades even as a soil scientist does today, layer by layer, like icing on a cake, growing different varieties of crops on each level.

they are clean persons and prefer clean jobs. By nature *adivasis* are easy-going persons, and prefer easy jobs, where much hard work is not involved. Since they are freedom loving men, they are not exactly amenable to the discipline of industrial workers. The *adivasi* is very time conscious, and accepts the sun as the only indicator of time. The above problems can be resolved, by better education of *adivasis*. Introduction of industrial culture, consciousness of better eating habits, clothing, living conditions and recreations may force them to earn more to meet their requirements. The programmes of de-

velopment will not succeed if tribals continue to be ignorant, unwilling and unable to accept changes that are necessary. Tribals will have to be educated, trained, motivated and persuaded to adopt technological and institutional innovations".

In short, we see that the government wants to increase the *adivasis'* requirements to ensure a better rolling, lucrative and more profitable economy for itself. At the same time, by telling the tribals they are uncivilized it wishes to secure for a privileged urbanized sector of society the natural resources, which the tribals have so zealously protected for centuries. This in a nut-shell, is the purpose and method of all so-called "development" programmes for tribals. Not surprisingly, many tribals, under such education opt for running into the government camp to create dynasties of tribal elites—a new phenomenon. Despite their wealth, however, they are not averse to taking reservation benefits.



Teaching an Oraon baby how to make wall drawings

The tribals of Chotanagpur come under the Fifth Schedule. The term "adivasi" applies to an indigenous people or tribe, which is a homoge-

neous community occupying a contiguous geographical area, with a language of its own. The solidarity of the tribal homeland is fundamental to saving their cultural identity. If the government, which is composed of (mainly) non-tribals, respected this, there would be no imbalance. The *Nagbanshi rajas* created stratification in Chotanagpur's tribal society from 64 AD. They introduced a *zamindari* and later *jagirdari* system which eroded traditional tribal rights, followed by *mahajans*, money-lenders and merchants who occupied tribal lands. Then came the Mughals and finally, the British.

Now a crisis has set into Chotanagpur. The cultural damage to the sensitive people of Chotanagpur who have paid the price of thousands of years of old culture for the benefit of industrialization is incalculable. ●

Photographs courtesy: Bulu Imam



GAJA RAKSHA

GAJA RAKSHA (Save The Elephant) is an international campaign for the protection of the Asiatic elephant. This campaign, initiated by SEED, Cochin and BIOME, Bhubaneswar is being coordinated world wide by EARTH FIRST(USA), RAINFOREST INFORMATION CENTRE (AUSTRALIA), and REFOREST THE EARTH (ENGLAND). The Asian elephant (*Elephas Maximus*) is a majestic and graceful animal. Once large herds roamed the extensive and dense forests of Asia. The destruction of jungle habitat and fodder has now limited their population to a few pockets. Large scale poaching has almost wiped out the entire population of male elephants. The result is that the male/female ratio is as low as 1:2000 in many forests. "Makhnas" or tuskless males are being born as part of bio-evolution. Apart from the issues of habitat, fodder destruction and poaching, GAJA RAKSHA also focuses on the sad plight of the large number of elephants in captivity. The elephant as Lord Ganesha is a very important symbol in Indian mythology. We hope to re-evolve this rich mythology which provides a framework for humans to live harmoniously with nature. The campaign proposes to make extensive use of the media. An exhibition on the Asiatic elephant is slated to be held in Bhubaneswar, Orissa in early 1993. Participation in the GAJA RAKSHA campaign is voluntary. Those wishing to get involved may please write to:

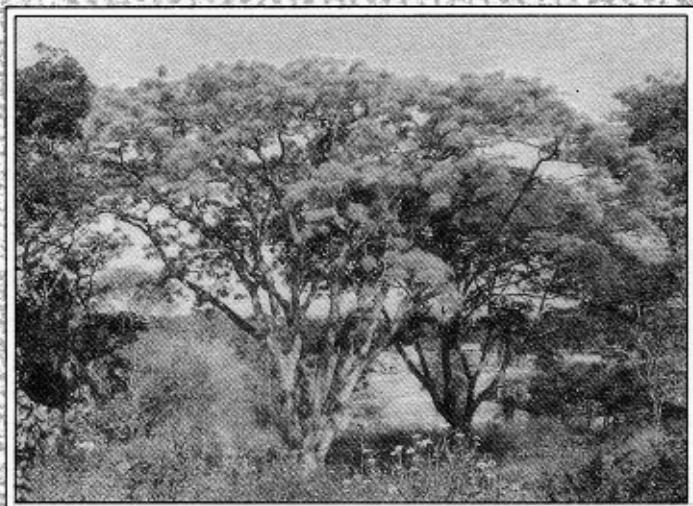
Dr. U.N.Dev, BIOME, B-6/11, Unit-9, Bhubaneswar, Orissa-751007.

OR

Anand Skaria, SEED, P.B.No.14, Cochin-682001, Kerala.

THE CURRENT CRISIS IN CHOTANAGPUR

SOCIO-POLITICAL, ECOLOGICAL, CULTURAL



BANSIDHAR RUKHIYAR, SANJAY LAL,
AUNINDO ROY AND BULU IMAM.

The breakdown in the tribals' powers and control over their lands and forests in Chotanagpur and neighbouring forested regions, can be traced right back to their tribal leader, Jaipal Singh's allegiance to the Congress party in the century's first quarter and the tribals' own leanings under the stewardship of other leaders like him. This laid bare, their lands and forests, rivers and mineral deposits to various instruments of acquisition and lordship over tribal rights in modern India, the own fortunes of the Congress and that awesome instrument of British colonial jurisprudence, the principle of eminent domain or the State's sovereign rights and title over all property and natural resources in the supposed interest of a supposedly socialist republic. This devastating clause was enshrined in the Indian constitution. India is the only country of the Commonwealth, apart from South Africa, to voluntarily incorporate this clause in its constitution and judicial system. Such laws exist to ensure the stability of the State, supposedly, even though it may be a violation of human rights. It may be pertinent to recall the words of Gandhi who said, "If the will of the majority violates the rights of the individual, then it is a transgression of justice." Such measures as Hoffman's Chotanagpur Tenancy Act and similarly, the Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act have been relegated to the dustbin by governmental rights to constitutionally acquire any tribal land it wishes.

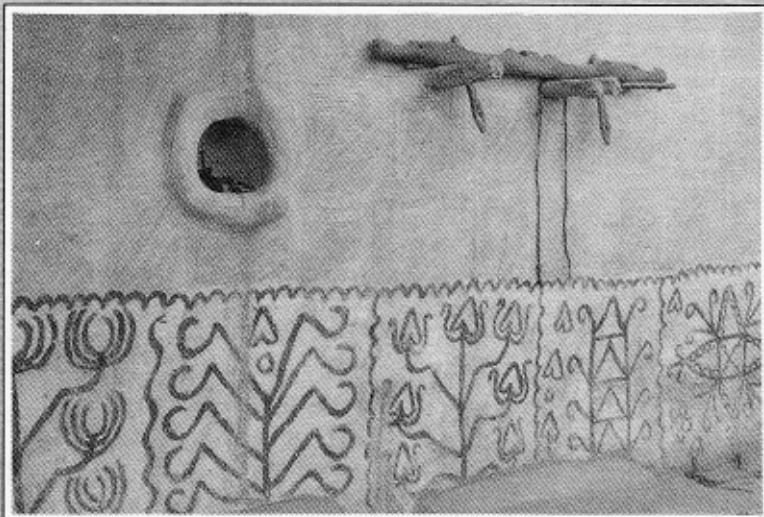
The Christian missions were the first instruments of applied practical British subversion of the tribals' culture and religion after the so called Sepoy Mutiny, which was actually an uncontrollable tribal uprising. In a series of waves, it threatened the very foundations of British sovereignty over tribal lands in the middle of the last century. Their theology denied tribals an individual, animist religion, grouping them with mono-theists. Their *Sarna* (Sacred Grove) religion has been excluded in the National General Census. These *sarna puja adivasis* called themselves *Saonsars*. It seems ironic that the Christian missions were not aware then that the rights of tribals over their own lands would one day be destroyed by the founding fathers of India.

The emasculation of tribal India began with the missionaries' double role as protectors of their land rights and destroyers of their cultural life. Today, in Chotanagpur, as elsewhere in tribal parts, the Scheduled Castes converted to Christianity feel wronged by reservation benefits being denied to them on account of religion. Scheduled Castes who have been converted to Christianity or Islam, unlike Hindus who have been converted are known as Dalits. The status of caste alone is insufficient to justify inclusion in the list and they must prove their handicaps individually.

The vast coffers of local natural wealth would once again be bartered by the tribals' new leaders, a motley band of one generation intellectuals who would sell their people, lock stock and barrel. These bureaucrats cared nothing for the true meaning of Gandhi's concept of self rule in their acquisitive greed, let alone the great man's concepts related to the spinning wheel and decentralisation of administration. Thus, both Christ and Dharmes were denied the wealth of tribal India, materially and spiritually. Seen that it is now high time for the missions to stop deviating the tribals from their traditions and religion, it is incumbent upon them to preach the gospel without fraternising



Birhor tribals making their own brick houses under the Jawahar Yojana Scheme.

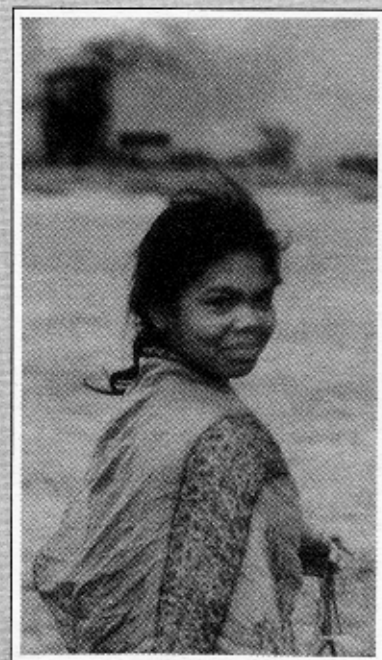


Kurmee tribals house decorations

with those who would coat indigenous life with a transparent veneer of western values.

The most major area of concern is the alarming rate at which these tribals' time honoured relationships with nature and natural deities are being systematically decimated. It is very fashionable among the elite to blame these poor adivasis for destroying forests, but while admitting a strain placed on the forest for mainly fence posts and fuel, I cannot help but observe that the very greatest threat lies in the public sector high-profit area of mining and large dams. Then, often, the villagers are

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Birhor girl in front of factory

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victims of large armed mafias as operate between the hill tracts of Khunti-Chaibasa area and the forests of Manoharpur in bordering Singhbhum district and Seraikela and Barbil in Orissa. The administration and police have succumbed. Trainloads of timber are sold at Adityapur near the steel township of Tatanagar. An open timber trade goes on in Tamar.

A major obstacle to the proper utilisation of land resources is mass

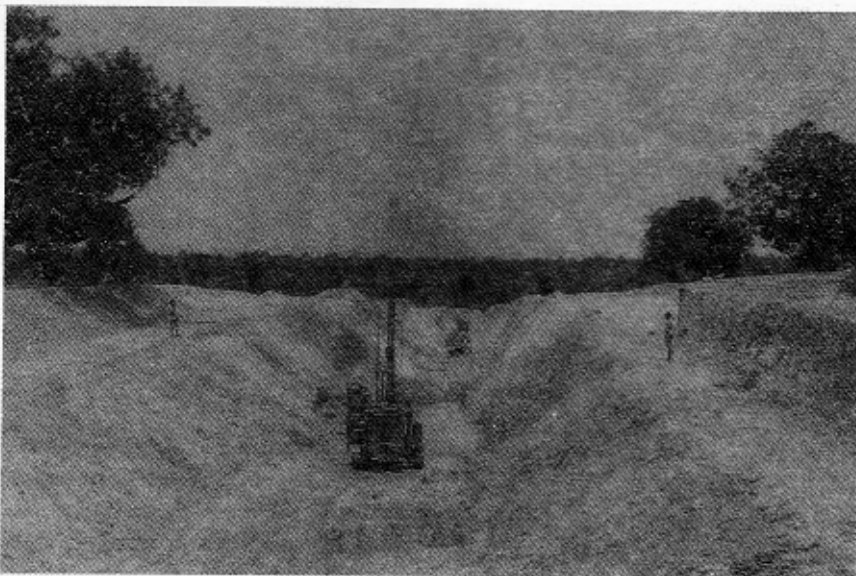
urbanisation of agricultural lands. This is in gross contravention of land use policy and existing land use laws. Cheap agricultural land is today's highest urban investment. Agricultural land is non-renewable and even more valuable than trees.

Water resource depletion is the next biggest problem. With increased rate of coal mining in the valley of the Damodar and the cutting down of forests all over Chotanagpur, Santhal Parganas and Singhbhum, as well as the introduction of the tube well, the water levels in the region are dramatically falling. This has been increasingly aggravated by the introduction of high yielding crop varieties of hybrids by international agencies like the FAO and these require higher water irrigation.

The Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC) has built half a dozen big dams and over five thousand small ones. The taming of the Damodar has converted the entire tract of the Valley into a vast coal belt, denuded of tree cover, with over 480 industries, so that dammed and dying, the almost waterless Damodar flows through India's industrial heartland known as Nehru's Dream. On its banks, large thermal power units at Patratu, Lalpania and Bokaro belch untreated emissions such as sulphur dioxide that is the prime ingredient of

acid rain and the murderer of fruit trees. At the closeby Suvarnarekha River, a similar tale of horrors is being enacted through an irrigation project scheduled for 2000 AD envisaging three dams-Galudih, Chandil and Iccha, with canals feeding Balasore and Mayurbhanj in Orissa. The World Bank is signing Rs.130 crore in Orissa's favour. Compensation to displaced oustees is not a guaranteed right. Iron ore and bauxite mines, haphazard industrialisation, deforestation all go on here in South Bihar, a region whose rich revenues pamper the exchequer with meagre returns. Here, surprisingly, water, coal and electricity are scarce. Rights to commons have disappeared in mining mania. State subject leases are scurrilously managed and small units require no environmental impact assessment.

Beinti is a village overlooking the Piparwar Opencast Project, the first of Central Coalfields Limited's (CCL) 23 new mines starting one after the other, with or without clearance from the Ministry Of Environment and Forests to mine around 29 million tonnes of coal annually at a destruction rate computed at around 400 hectares per million tonnes. The Piparwar Opencast project conducted in collaboration with Australian technology is going on now for the past two years without any environmental clearance not even condi-

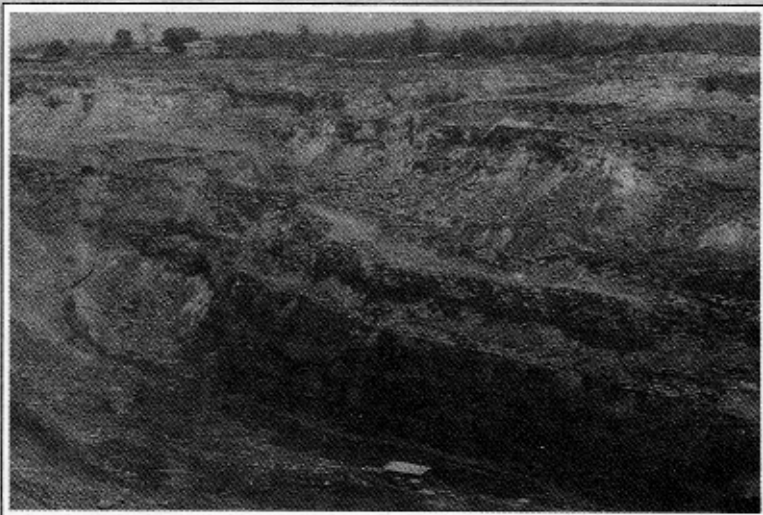


Open cast strip cutting in Piparwar.

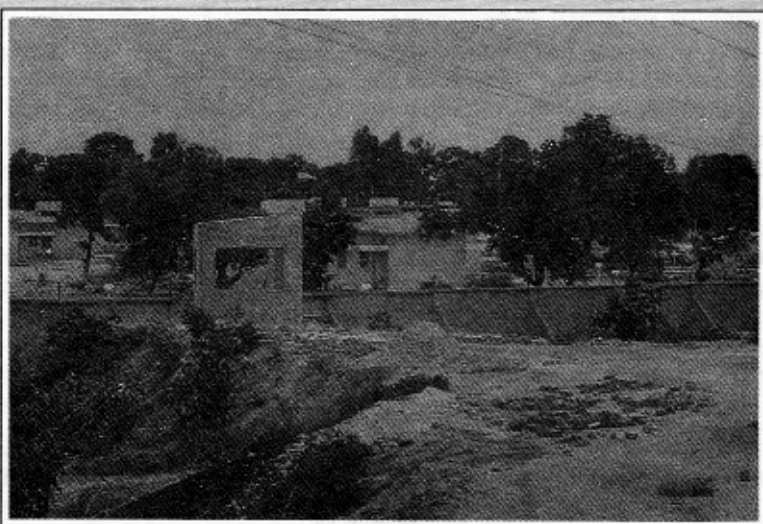
tional as in the case of Tehri dam. The railways have started constructing a massive siding in the heart of Meluskiegunj, a heritage zone. Envisioned mines with the names of emperors such as Kumaragupta, Samudragupta and Chandragupta are indeed fitting for the alluvial rice beds of the upper Damodar's basin, for here, the iron edicts of the Emperor Ashoka were cast. Overlording the destruction, Australian engineers in Khaki shorts continue their stewardship of oriental resources, while the Damodar, like a slit vein, helplessly flows under the vast forests of the Mohudi ranges and falls like a last heart beat's blood drop from the heights of Aswa Pahar to the dying valley below.

Whither culture then? Can it stay alive in the midst of poverty and exploitation? Poverty in the middle of plenty is a glaring phenomenon in Chotanagpur. Where 'industrialism' has not intruded into the natural undisturbed tribal life-style, there is still plenty and harmony. Villagers were not dying of hunger or malnutrition as the WHO likes to tell us. In the words of Dr.R.K.Samanta, from a recent survey of the plight of coal mine workers, "the miserable and inhuman conditions in which these workers live are unimaginable and yet to be believed by many. Their exploitation in the hands of local political leaders, unscrupulous contractors, corrupt officials and mafia bosses have made them believe that their suffering will never end".

There are all too obvious changes in occupational structure in the aftermath of modernisation and alienation from ancestral lands. Development projects have reduced the tribals to industrial nomads. They were therefore placed not only on the periphery of industrial settlements like Tatanagar, but were also forced to compete in a new materialistic culture to which they had no key. This rootlessness has forced them to migrate to cities or turn to prostitution. The so called Tribal Development Programmes aim to "arrest the nomadic character of the tribes and provide the



The Bacchara Open Cast Coal Mine.

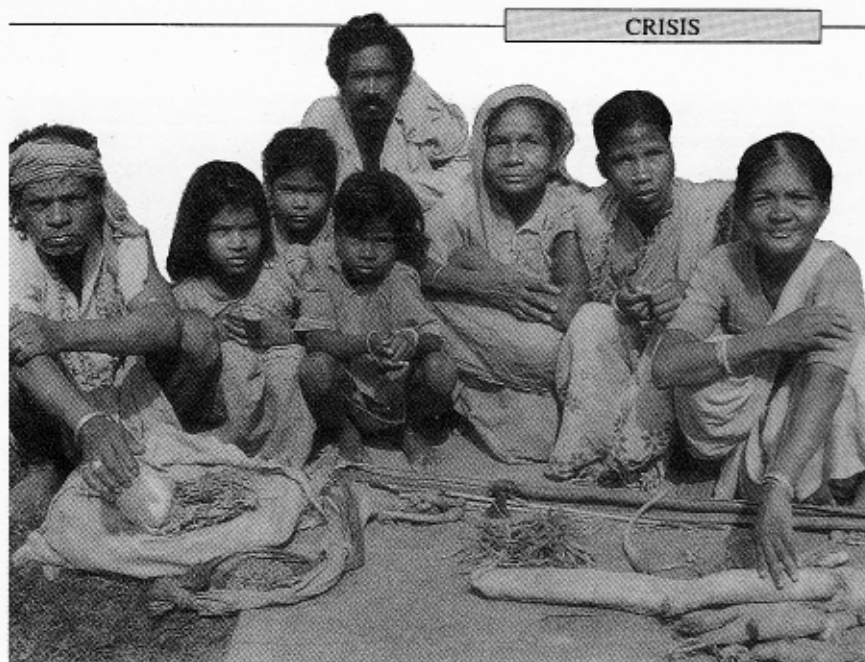


Australian Engineers' Housing.

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wherewithal to lead a settled life". The entire Birhor resettlement programme under the Jawahar Yojna has been a failure. Forced to live in permanent dwellings, Birhor hunters return at dusk, empty handed, as the forests have shrunk and been overgrazed. Still they refuse to take up industrial labour since their economy is closely related to their nomadism. Birhor women may be seen begging in Hazaribagh town. They say there is no *chope* left in the jungles to make traditional ropes. They live beside the Hazaribagh National Park, which too is denuded.

All forms of village craft in mining



*Kamli the Birhor medicine woman and her family -
a vanishing tribe*

areas have disappeared. Dress, food and value systems have undergone massive alterations under the influence of television and cinema.

What needs to be done in the face of all this? An urgent need is to shift from corrective to protective measures by policy planners. The Wasteland Development Mission needs to become the Wastelands Protection Mission. The nation's eco-cultural base must be

strengthened and the bond between ecology and culture taught to the urban youth. Environmentalism must be shown to be sound economics, shrewd planning of resources and an affirmation of all that is best culturally and spiritually. It must be established in the view of the community as sparks of human regeneration which fly in times of moral decadence and cultural decay.

The songs and dances of

Chotanagpur are definitely among the most beautiful anywhere. These require to be recorded and preserved, not to be kept in dusty museums and archives, but in a living, loving and breathing tradition of young and old, men and women, willing to adopt the natural way. There is neither east nor west in this high atmosphere, only oneness. Rebuilding and discovery of the evidence of a spiritual renaissance even as we witness the devastation of war.

In the dead of winter, when ground frost carpets the North Karanpura valley and partridges cuddle in their downy nests and the Oraons oil their cattle during the *Sohrae*, can we conquer through developing and destroying? Is culture really like toothpaste, malleable and changeable into a commodity, and can we dare to stop the heartbeat of a tribal youth and transfer it to the urban jungle? Here, Chotanagpur is a phoenix and a lesson.

Bansidhar Rukhiyar is a lecturer in Humanities at the Ananda College, Hazaribagh. Sanjay and Aunindo are students of St. Columbus College also in Hazaribagh.

Photographs courtesy: Bulu Imam.



THE ASUR KAHANI

Chutia Lohra was an Asur blacksmith by profession and a socerer by choice. This story was heard chanted by him. Today the socerers of the tribes have the monopoly of story telling. Legends are a part of their ritual.

Dawn had arrived in the Brinda forest and mist veiled the green hills of Naro. The Asurains, wives of the great iron smelters, the Asurs, had gone to dig for iron ore in the sixteen pits. The forest was the home of two vultures named Rai Gidhain and Jata Gidhain, both hen vultures. They often wheeled about the tall silk cotton tree. They built a nest with the plough which they carried in their claws and when the nest was built, each of them laid an egg in it. But the eggs refused to hatch, so they went to Singbonga for advice. Singbonga told them to wait for nine months and then crack open their eggs. When they did this, a male child emerged from the egg of Rai Gidhain and a female one from that of Jata Gidhain. Both were undernourished and weak. When they went to Singbonga again, he advised them to go to the forest of Brinda and carry away the children of the Asurains who had gone to dig iron ore from the sixteen pits.

He heard the plaintive cry of the heifer with the straight horns and the lowing of the cow with turned down horns. The lotus covered pond and the flowering marsh were drying up, shrubs and herbs withered, and birds and insects found no food.

Naturally, when the Asurains couldn't locate their children, they begged and pleaded with their husbands, the Asurs, to tell them where they were. The Asurs fired and fanned their mighty furnaces, gathering charcoal from a dozen forests. The Asurains pumped the bellows and the Asurs hammered the iron ore for seven days and seven nights. The whole world was enveloped in smoke and even Hans Raja Pankh Raja, the flying horse of Singbonga, was covered with soot and couldn't drink water.

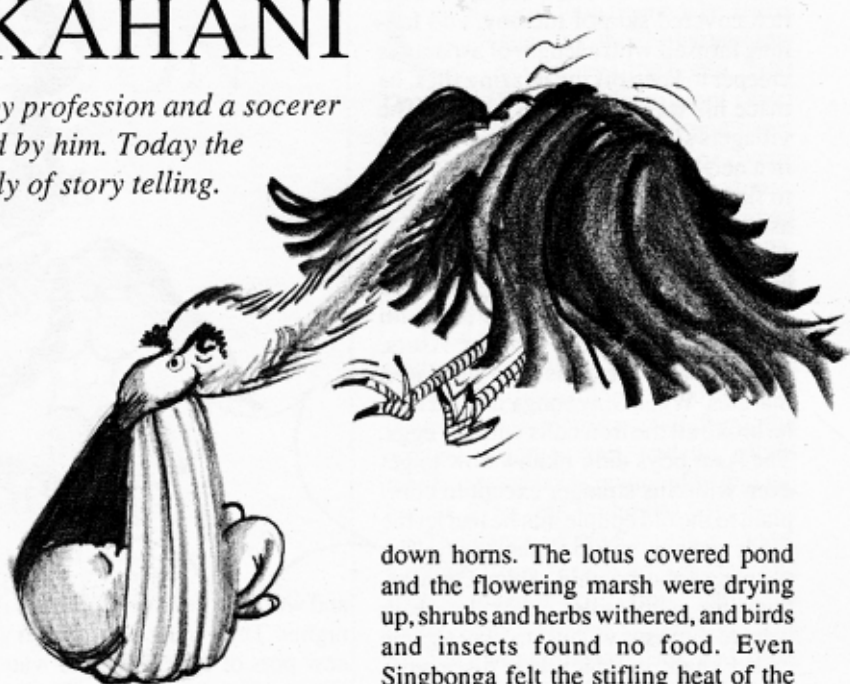
Singbonga sat on a golden throne, sceptre in hand, observing the situation. The Asurs had little rice and no cultivation. He heard the plaintive cry of the heifer with the straight horns and the lowing of the cow with turned

down horns. The lotus covered pond and the flowering marsh were drying up, shrubs and herbs withered, and birds and insects found no food. Even Singbonga felt the stifling heat of the Asur furnaces and he was angry. In his rage he wanted to cut them to pieces, but Sita, his wife, knew that he would be outnumbered and asked him to desist. She advised him to use cunning instead. So he sent the Fearless Drongo and the Watchful Shrike as his messengers to request the Asurs to stop fanning their bellows as everything on earth was drying up and Singbonga himself could not escape the heat. But the Asurs replied,

We are, Singbonga, we are free, we are our own masters, Before Singbonga was, we were.

They threw black charcoal dust at the Drongo who remained black ever since and tore his tail which remained forked. Singbonga then sent the Worshipping Lark and the Paradise Flycatcher to plead with the Asurs. They covered the lark in iron ore dust and pulled the flycatcher's tail to thrice its length. Similarly, the Observant Crow which was a white bird became sooty black and the Bushy Coppermith singed red.

Singbonga sensed that it was futile to send his emissaries and knew that he must act at once. He came to earth and immediately spied a boy whose body



was covered with sores. He donned the itch covered skin of the boy, and fanning himself with a length of asparagus creeper to keep off the buzzing flies, he made his way to the Asur village. The villagers spat at him in disgust. Finally, in a neighbouring village he was lucky to find an old couple who adopted him as their child, for they had no issue.

One day he asked them to give him eggs to eat. With the eggs he proceeded to the Asur village to play marbles with the young boys there. But the Asurs, being great ironsmiths, had only iron marbles. When Singbonga met his turn he broke all the iron balls with his eggs. The Asur boys didn't know how to get even with this stranger except to complain to the old couple that he had let the fowls and pigs eat up all the paddy. The couple, of course, chided him. One day, this time with millet cakes, he again went to the Asur village, to play a game called khati, in which iron discs were used. He broke their discs with his millet cakes. Once again the Asur boys complained to the old couple.

Many were the devices that Singbonga used to establish his supremacy on earth. He caused a shortage of iron in the furnaces of the Asurs. He was beginning to get acknowledged as having strange magical powers and the villagers beseeched him to remove their straitened condition. He said, "Sacrifice a white cock in the name of Singbonga and you will find iron in plenty". But there were shortages again and again. Finally, when their furnaces ran dry for the fourth time, Singbonga said, "You must sacrifice a man in the name of Singbonga. Go to the Doesa country, the Khukhra country (Chotanagpur) for there you can buy a man for sacrifice. Here, take these golden pumpkins with you as payment". When the Asurs returned, they had no man with them for no one wanted to sacrifice their child. The itch covered boy said, "Take me, sacrifice me". At which the old couple wept copiously, but when they were reassured that they would want for nothing after his death, they reluctantly agreed.

The Asurs took Singbonga to sacrifice him. As he was being led to the furnace to be sealed inside, he said, "Take the skin off a white he-goat to make new bellows. Let two virgins fast



and work the bellows for three days and nights. They must bring water in two new pots of clay. With the water they must extinguish the fire."

After three days the virgins broke open the furnace hole with husking poles. Lo and behold, the itch covered man emerged golden and shining as the dawn. In his two hands he held a golden plate and bowl.

Seeing this the Asurs were dumbfounded. Naturally their greed was spurred on, and they couldn't wait to see if there was more of this treasure inside the furnace. Singbonga urged them to enter it saying, "Do enter all of you. You are many and indeed you can bring out more gold than I ever could". The greedy Asurs entreated Singbonga to make a furnace twelve kilometres long and equally broad. The Asurs and their sons clamoured to get inside, leaving only the Asurains behind. He got the Asurains to seal the furnace fast and plaster up the doors with charcoal dust and iron ore and having done that, to pump the bellows furiously. Thus, the process of destruction started. When the blood flowed out he said that it was the juice of the betel leaves and when cries were heard, he said that the Asur boys were fighting over treasure.

The furnace doors were finally opened, and to their horror, the Asurains discovered that they had lost all their men. When they turned to who they knew now was none other than Singbonga himself, he said, "I shall

appoint a head priest in every village, who shall keep you supplied with rice."

Singbonga then mounted his flying horse, Hans Raja Pankh Raja and was carried away into the heavens with the Asur women clinging to his garments. One fell on a hill, another in a pool of water, a third on high ground, a fourth in a ravine, a fifth in a water hole, and a sixth on a round stone. Others were left clinging onto thorns and creepers which still clutch at passing people. Some became Tiril trees and yet some others were transformed into flies and mosquitoes. A single Asurain remained, Asa Pati by name and Singbonga allowed her to remain as she was. There entered her body a boy and a girl who nourished and perpetuated the Asur race. This is the Asur Kahani handed down by our forefathers to remind us of the several beginnings of man. ●

(Adapted from ASUR KAHANI as told by Victor Rosner, SJ.)

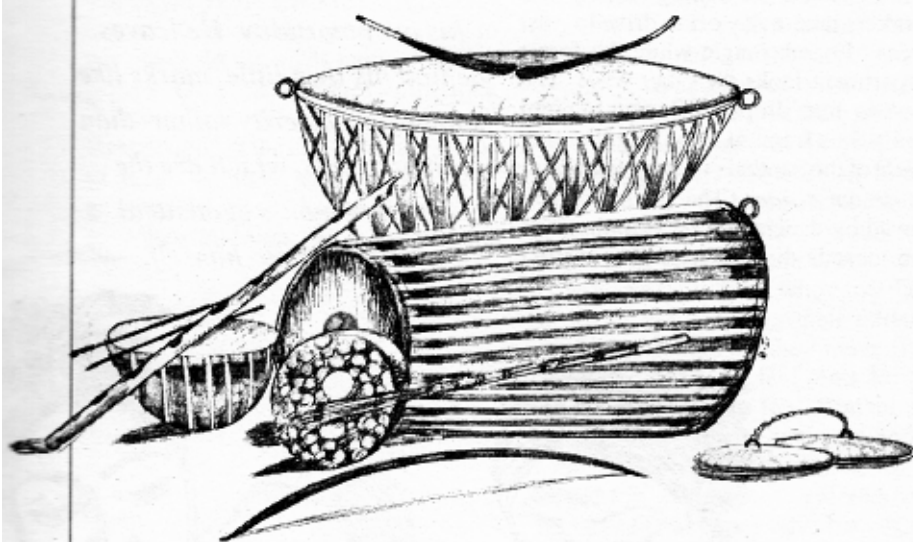
Victor Rosner, SJ, was a renowned tribal authority. Born in Rangoon in 1911, he lived and worked in the east and north-east of India. His doctoral thesis was on Munda witchcraft and magic, and from his pen flowed a score of books on tribal lore and tradition. His vast ability was exceeded only by his great humility which made him a friend of kings and commoners.

Illustrations: Ripin Kalra

CELEBRATION OF LIFE

FOLK DANCES AND FESTIVALS OF CHOTANAGPUR

UJJAL GHOSH AND BULU IMAM



Dance, song, poetry, celebrations and festivals among tribals is a world in itself, too large to describe in a short article. The authors here have endeavoured to broadly delineate some of the folk dances and festivals, linking them with the seasons. What we cannot fail to observe is the inevitable connection between their natural habitat and culture. The destruction of one will obviously lead to the death of the other.

Chotanagpur is a mystical land with legendary rivers such as the Suvarnakha (Golden Line) and the Damodar (Dah-muh-da: river of sweet water). Here, amidst water and trees, the tribals dance to the rhythm of rivers, worshipping their deities in *sarnas*. They trace their origin to Mathura and Brindavan and the legend of Krishna, who was a member of the tribal order of *Savara*.

Festivals through the ages have changed but little. Nor have basic tribal instruments like the *tiro* or flute, the *mandar*, which is a small drum, the *nagara*, a larger one, and the violin made of horsehair, iguana skin and the handle of an old umbrella!

The dance of the Santhal is heady, varying from season to season. The Birhor dances are slow, while the Oraons have vibrant war dances. The Munda woman sway back and forth with their arms linked, dancing in the *chota akhara* when the men have gone hunting. A bride being escorted to her husband's village by a long line of dancers over hill and dale, the night pierced by flaring torches and the throb of drums, is an unforgettable experience.

Each tribe reacts in its own unique way to nature, evolving a cosmology which weaves itself into expressions of immediate culture. Their dances are usually based on *karma*, life after death, planetary movements, and natural occupations such as hunting and fishing. In village after remote village in Hazaribagh, Ranchi, Giridih, Singhbhum, Dhanbad and Palamau,

The dance of the Santhal is heady, varying from season to season. The Birhor dances are slow, while the Oraons have vibrant war dances. The Munda woman sway back and forth with their arms linked, dancing in the chota akhara when the men have gone hunting.



Dancing on Sarhul Day

one can see variations of the same themes.

The Oraon men have their favourite war dances, the excitement conveyed through brandishing of weapons and tall leaps in circles, clad in the *paiki* war dress, which is a stunning ensemble. The Oraon women do the courtyard dance or *jadur*. The Hos are much more sentimental and their dances usually reflect courtship. The *Maghi* dances are more carefree and spirited, running from village to village, all the while singing and feasting. Inebriation adds to the fun. The drink for the occasion is a rice beer, *handia*, a wine distilled from the calyx of the *mohwa* flower in summer. Birhor dances usually please occult powers and sweep out disease, misfortunes and local calamities. They also propitiate various clan spirits like the *ora bongas* or *buru bongas*.

Celebrations begin in the new year with the flowering of the *sal* tree and the crimson flame of the forest or *palash*. Young men and women gather at the *sarna*, to appease the residing deity. Priests and elders, wearing white clothes and turbans, offer rice, vermillion, liquor and chickens. Young people exchange the scented blossoms of the *sal*. Summer stalks the land in *chait* through March and April, while the jungle is full of edible flowers, spinach, yams and tubers. The *Phagu Sendra* or annual spring hunt is an event of great

fanfare; even in mining areas, the workers take a day off to drive to vast areas of scrub jungle while the forest department looks the other way! The *mohwa* tree drops its flowers at night and all is fragrant. The big hunting event of the Santhals is the *jethu shikar* or *desom sendra*. The hunts are followed by dancing and celebration, and the meat is divided according to strict

rules and custom.

The Munda calendar runs fairly parallel with that of the Oraon and the Santhal. The *hon-bah-parab* or sowing of paddy is celebrated in *Baisakh* (June) and *batabuli* just before transplantation in June-July. The fields are resonant now with *ropa sereng* songs and the forests with *bir sereng*. The *dhanbuni puja* has taken place and depending on the monsoons, rain-water gushes through fields, each carefully managed with a fish trap or *kummi* with which the Oraon farmer catches his dinner of *gharai* fish.

Winter is the best time in Chotanagpur, when hill and dale are

Immortality, eternity, and the essence of permanence rests upon the tribal's knowledge of his own mortality. He leaves behind his own little marks like stones for posterity rather than monuments which are the modern man's egotistical legacies unto himself.



clothed in green. Then the Mundas celebrate *magh parab*, the propitiation of ancestors and the *phagu* which coincides with *Holi* of the Hindus. This is approximately the same time that the Assamese tribes celebrate the great *Bihu*. Dussehra is a time when the *kolom singbonga* is worshipped on the threshing floor and the new rice is eaten.

Among all these diverse tribes the *bonga* or spirit force is the paramount source of all life. It is the pattern which connects the parts to a larger whole in which their place is assured and pertinent. For a people who see in nature a cosmic system existing in arrangements of matter, their reverence for hills and mountains, springs, waterholes, streams, and even the meanings attached to roads and sites of menhirs and smaller stones needs no reiteration. For the tribal, past and present coexist in a fifth dimension that modern man seeks to decipher but cannot. Relationships are everything to the tribal: in the signs painted or engraved on rock surfaces in the rock shelters of North Karanpura in Hazaribagh, in the earliest petroglyphs of man, in the legends that past generations have handed down in unbroken tradition. It is beyond the



Photograph courtesy: B.N. Saraswati.

perception of our national planners. To the Santhali *manjhi*, *Thakur*, *Singbonga*, *Maranburu* the Mountain God, *Jhairera*, the deity of the sacred grove, *Chandi*, Goddess of the hunt, *Chandabonga*, the Moon God, *Moreko*, the God of Fire, are real. In his sacred grove he places clay figures of elephants or horses. He worships ancestor spirits in village shrines made of wood and clay. These *Manjhishaan* are common to the nomadic Birhors who carry these pieces of wood among their portable goods and chattel as they move from one encampment of leaf tents to another. The Munda, Ho, Santhal and Oraon have a sacred altar in the *sarna*, with the two tallest trees being reserved for *Maranburu* and *Jhairera*. While the Oraon may have his custom and the Munda his, while the Santhal may differ slightly in his, whether it be four chickens for *Maranburu* or two, whether it be a white or dappled chicken for *Jhairera*, or a black or brown fowl for *Gosainera* in the *sarna*, the tribals of Chota Nagpur find unity under the umbrella of one permanent deity, Nature.

Thus the cycle of the festival of a tribal year comes full circle: in the summer heat, desire is heightened and fertility assured. In the deepest summer month of *Jaith* (May-June), the first plough breaks the soil. It is cut in the night of the full moon from the soft white wood of the Gambhar tree by a

fully naked man in the middle of the barren fields. Its iron tip is the same iron with which the Asurs soldered their pride with which to challenge the paramourcy of *Singbonga*.

The Santhal sings, "Our house, brother, is made of clay. Its rafter will not last forever; Man's life is but for a day."

Immortality, eternity, and the essence of permanence rests upon the tribal's knowledge of his own mortality. He leaves behind his own little marks like stones for posterity rather than monuments which are the modern man's egotistical legacies unto himself.

However, with the march of modern development, coal besmeared Santhal and Munda tribals are forgetting their native languages, *Kui* and *Shadri* and the Oraons are no more talking in *Kurukh*. It is strange that we speak of 'culture' in a country that seeks to destroy rural and vernacular traditions. The old tribal songs are accompanied today by the guitar and western drums and the harmonica in place of the Santhal violin, the mander and flute. The destruction of culture is the latest celebration in Chotanagpur.

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Sanjula Hansda, grand old man of Jarwadih, playing the small Tamak drum to assemble the hunters from Jarwadih village.



A Santhal striking his bow as some Ganju tribals with hunting nets join for the day's hunt.

What are some of the great hunt rules? First, all game is fair sport. Second, the hunter who can lay his claim is the one who first wounded the animal, be it man or dog. In the Great Hunt, man and dog are proclaimed equal. Third, the *khand* or neck portion of the hunt goes to the *dihri*, or the hunt priest. A third and three fourths goes to the elders of the council. This council with members from different villages then re-divide the meat, so that every

person who attends the hunt gets a portion through *niyam*. It is the one time in the Santhal year that all are considered equal, irrespective of age or status.

The Santhal dogs are important to the hunting lore and worthy of special attention. They belong to an original Indian breed. They are similar to Patti. Balia of the Langa Savaras of the Eastern Ghats, and the dogs belonging to the hill tribes of north eastern Chittagong in Bangladesh, and the Banjara or Cara-

All tribal hunting is a community undertaking, involving all able bodied persons. This is all the more evident in those tribal hunts in which the village community is represented by every male capable of joining in the hunt in any capacity—bowman, beater, or carrier. It is for this reason that hunting is one of the best unifying factors in a village community.

van Hound called pariah by the British after the Paraiyars or drum-beater caste. The Santhali dogs are hunters par excellence—real survivors and hunters in the classic sense of the term. The Bender tribes of Karnataka and the Baigas of Bastar also have similar dogs.

There are some taboos that are observed before and during the hunt. First, *dikkus* or non-tribals are never invited to ritual hunts, as these are strictly tribal events. Second, although all tribals are invited, some have to stay away by force of tradition: such as husbands with pregnant wives, those who ate meat that day, and men and boys who combed their hair in reality or in their dreams. This rule, however, applies more to the Kharia, Munda, or Oraon tribes, and not to the Santhals. Third, Oraons and Santhals both believe that a woman carrying an empty pot of water is a frightful omen, while a woman stepping over an arrow renders it useless.

There is no such thing as a lone tribal hunter. All tribal hunting is a community undertaking, involving all able bodied persons. This is all the more evident in those tribal hunts in which the village community is represented by every male capable of joining in the hunt in any capacity—bowman, beater, or carrier. It is for this reason that hunting is one of the best unifying factors in a village community. It asks for cooperation, responsibility, understanding, and obedience.

The arrow is the most important adjunct in a tribal's life. As a Santhal draws a barbed arrow (*chiari*) from his long hair and strings his bow, it becomes a sacred survival weapon in his hands. The arrow is the ultimate provider, be it a huge *bagh-dhani* (tiger arrow) or a *chiari*. Young Birhors are guided by arrows to their brides' homes. In marriages, the fingers of the bride and the groom are nicked by an arrow-head, and the blood thus drawn seals the union. The same blood is also applied on the bride's forehead. The Oraon bride's gift to a husband on her wedding day is an arrow. When the tribal returns home with his bride, he leads her path with the flight of his arrow. It is written in folklore, "From waterhole to hearth they come led by an arrow". It is at a waterhole that a newly wed groom proves his ability to provide for his bride: he shoots an arrow at a *sakhua* leaf through the loop of his woman's left arm as she stands, hand on hip, balancing a pot of water on her head. The arrow is used to cut the umbilical cord of infants, and to later shave their



Hunters and Dog during the day's hunting.

heads. The arrow is the high priest in the three prescribed rites of passage: birth, marriage, death, in addition to a fourth: friendship. The elaborate rites that accompany these hunts, the rules that govern disputed game, the songs and dances, the washing of the hunters' feet, the care and solicitude for the

wounded hunters by the women, -all these prove the importance of hunting in tribal life. Small wonder, then, that a successful hunt is considered a good omen for the well-being of the tribe.

Photographs courtesy: Bulu Imam



Ripin Kalra

THE STORY OF THE DOVE'S MUSICAL CALL

PHILOMENA TIRKEY IMAM

This is a very old and until recently unrecorded folk tale of the Oraons. There are, as you know, three types of doves in our forests, the Tilai Porkhi or speckled dove, the Jharanda Porkhi or the ringed dove and the most common of the three, the Therko Porkhi or little brown dove. Undeniably, as most people would vouch for, the last of them has the sweetest call. But how did it get its call?

Once, in a large forest in the heart of Chotanagpur's emerald land, there lived two doves. They were brother and sister. They billed and cooed to each other, although not in quite the sweet tones they do now. They used to work, threshing grain in the farmer's house. One day, the sister dove felt extremely hungry and ate a little of the grain she was threshing. When the brother dove measured the grain to give to the farmer



in the evening, he found that a few were missing. When his sister confessed that she had eaten a little, her

brother, in a fit of wild rage, smote her a blow that killed the little dove. He suddenly realised what he had done.

Overcome with grief, he flew round and round the courtyard weeping and crying, *Utho bahen kutto chawal purlay purlay* (Wake up sister, thresh the rice quickly quickly.) But his sister would never wake again. And so, from that day onwards, the brother dove would sit in the forest all day and sing his mournful cry. This is the same song you hear even today, which goes eternally thus,

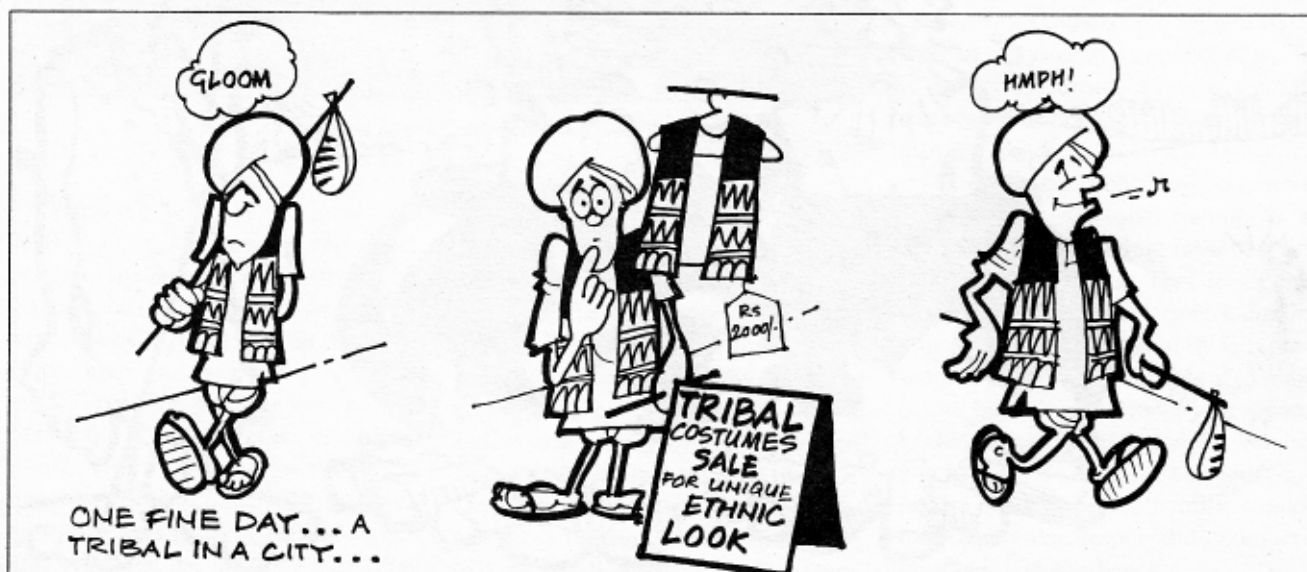
Utho bahen kutto chawal purlay purlay.

Have you seen that the dove gathers the grass seeds into a big ball which she places under a tree in the winter months? Here she will build her nest and lay her eggs during the summer. When there is nothing else to eat, she and her children will feed on the grass seeds. This way she will never have to steal the farmer's grain again. Her brother still flies round the forest crying—

Utho bahen kutto chawal purlay purlay.

Philomena Tirkey Imam is an Oraon tribal brought up in a traditional tribal family living in the forest village of Dato. She is very adept at interpreting tribal folklore. She is married to Bulu Imam.

Illustration: Oroon Kumar



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Binti is the Santal song of cosmology and is recited by a group of three or more singers at the time of marriage ceremonies. After the members of the bridegroom's party arrive at the bride's house, they are asked several intriguing questions and are expected to give proper answers to these questions. No food or drinks are served unless these questions are correctly answered. The rigidity of this test has somewhat declined in recent years.

Both the questions and the answers are in the form of songs. All along, as the questions and the answers go on, there is jest and good humour. Thereafter, the members of the bride's party introduce the Binti song and *handia* is served liberally. The entire song is meant to put the individual occasion in a wider, universal context of society and tradition. Marriage as an institution is referred back to the beginning of human creation and the particular occasion of the marriage is sought to be viewed in the larger context of the creation of the world, the dawn of human civilization, the emergence of the Santal community and its migration through history.

From this, one gets an impression that the Santhals (and perhaps also their close neighbours, the Mundas) lived in Western India and migrated eastward, until they finally settled down in regular habitations in the present Chotanagpur Division of Bihar and the Mayurbhanj District of Orissa.

The song is part of an important oral tradition. In every village, there are some professional singers who learn by heart the Binti from their forefathers. When they then recite it, they make occasional additions and modifications which is peculiar to all oral tradition. The singers introduce the subject saying that they have not witnessed

BINTI

THE SANTHAL SONG OF CREATION MYTH

SITAKANT MAHAPATRA



the incidents they are going to narrate but they have learnt of them from their ancestors. It is not written down anywhere nor published.

The Binti song is repetitive and there are many lines of refrain. This

adds to the total length of the performance. The Binti song this author had the opportunity to listen to in different Santal villages in Chotanagpur and Mayurbhanj District, sometimes extends to two or three hours. There is only marginal variation in the theme of the song. Given below is a gist of the song in its essentials.

The world as we see it today did not exist then. Everywhere there was only endless expanse of water. Trees, creepers, animals, nothing existed. The gods in the heavens and Maranburu decide that they would create a world in this universal expanse of water and give birth to trees, creepers and animals. After further deliberations, Maranburu rubbed the dirt off his left and right palms and with that He fashioned two tiny birds. Then He instilled life into these birds. The bird that came out of the dirt from His left palm became a female bird, The *Hansli chene*. The other bird which was created out of the dirt from the right palm became a male bird, the *Hans chene*. The moment the two birds got life, they started singing and cackling and asked for some place where they could build a nest. Maranburu took pity on them and through the gods directed Kichua Raj (the king of the earth worms) to bring some earth from the bottom of the sea and to put it on the surface of the waters. Kichua Raj did accordingly but all the earth that he brought dissolved in the waters of the sea in no time. Maranburu and the gods started worrying. After lot of deliberations, they decided that a king cobra would sit on the back of the Hara Raj (the king of the turtles) and that on the head of the cobra a golden plate would be kept and Kichua Raj would put all the soil it brought up from the bottom of the sea on this plate. That being

done, the earth gradually took shape.

In turn, trees and creepers were born. Maranburu planted a *karam* tree on the earth and the two birds lived in the *karam* tree. They built a nest in the tree and laid two eggs. Out of the two eggs the first humans were born - a male and a female. The moment they were born, they started crying and the whole sky was rent with their cry. All the gods and Maranburu came down to see them. Maranburu told the gods that these were the first human beings. He took them out of the birds' nest, placed them on the leaves of an *Asan* tree, put them in the lap and purified them by sprinkling cowdung water. He named them Pilchu Kala and Pilchu Kuli. The gods built a dwelling house for the Pilchu Kala and Pilchu Kuli where they lived. Gradually they grew up and from childhood passed into youth. They were naked, and did not know shame. In the meantime, the gods consulted Maranburu as to how mankind would grow in numbers. Maranburu advised Pilchu Kala and Pilchu Kuli to cook rice with *sagah* grass seeds and to soak it with water and three powdered *ranu* (a substance used for fermentation). Maranburu told them that this should be allowed to ferment for three days, and after that the liquid portion should be decanted out and taken after offering it to Him. As per His direction, Pilchu Kala and Pilchu Kuli prepared this drink called *handia* and took it. They fell in love.

With love came feelings of shame, sin, good and evil. Maranburu appeared before them and Pilchu Kala and Pilchu Kuli confessed their sense of guilt and shame for having fallen in love. He advised them to wear the leaves of trees. He also explained to them that there was no sin in love and that it was the most sacred human emotion. He directed them to live as husband and wife from that day. He also directed them to cultivate the land and to earn their livelihood. They lived accordingly and with the passage of time they had seven sons and seven daughters.

These children in their turn grew up and passed from childhood and adolescence to youth. They used to go to the forests to hunt. The young maidens also

used to go to the forest to collect flowers and fruits. During their sojourn in the forests, the seven sons and seven daughters of Pilchu Kala and Pilchu Kuli fell in love, in pairs. Maranburu advised Pilchu Kala and Pilchu Kuli that there was no sin in it even though they were brothers and sisters. But later marriages were to be according to prescribed laws of *gotras*.

Once while hunting in the forest, they killed a Murmu Enga (a female animal resembling a large sized deer) by hitting it with an arrow. It was so big that they could not carry it back home. So they decided to cut it into pieces in the jungle itself. They were surprised when they discovered a living human being inside the stomach of the animal. They named this child Bitol Murmu. Thereafter they cooked the meat and had a feast in the forest. Different kinds of functions had to be performed from the time of killing and dressing Murmu Enga to the final feast. Depending upon those functions, the performers were assigned particular *parises* (*gotras*) and they were the following:

- i) *Murmu*
- ii) *Hansda*
- iii) *Hembrom*
- iv) *Marandi*
- v) *Soren*
- vi) *Tudu*
- vii) *Kisku*
- viii) *Baske*
- ix) *Chane*
- x) *Besra*
- xi) *Danda*; and
- xii) *Gondwar*

Since Bitol Murmu had come out of the stomach of the Murmu Enga, he was assigned all the social functions relating to birth, death etc. Likewise other functions were assigned to other *gotras*. Gradually mankind increased in numbers with the birth of children to these seven parents, the sons and daughters of Pilchu Kala and Pilchu Kuli. They assembled in the shade of three trees in the forest, namely, *Lepej Reel* (the *Kendu* tree), *Khad matkon* (*Mahul* tree) and *Ladeya Bale* (*Banyan* tree) and discussed where to establish their settlement. It took twelve long years to come to this division and ultimately in the shade of *Sari Sarjom* (*Sal* tree) they took the final decision as to the location of their settlement. They tied a brownish young fowl at a particular spot for five days and five nights, and found that it was not killed by any animals of the forest. Then they decided that was the proper place for a human settlement. The *Sal* tree under which the fowl was tied was designated Father Era or the sacred grove where they worshipped their deities and near which they lived.

The song then goes on to describe the growth of the population of the tribe, its migration through different places such as *Hihidi*, *Pipidi*, the warfares that had to be waged with local inhabitants as they continued their victorious journey onward and how they finally came to the land where they live now. It ends by recounting how they remember all this with gratitude to their ancestors whose blessings are then invoked for making the particular marriage ceremony a happy communion of souls.

Illustration: Devdutt Pattanaik



ORAL TRADITION

TRIBAL SONG -POEMS

SITAKANT MAHAPATRA

The primitive poem or song is part of a complex of communal activity, which includes singing, dancing, religious and social celebrations. These are integrally related. It is necessary to view these poem-songs as part of such a total community activity. This is not true of modern poetry.

Most tribal languages are unwritten; conventional from the point of view of usage but fresh and inventive and highly musical. They contain a large number of symbols. It is necessary to retain the symbolism in translation as it is the essence of their poetry. Most of the songs circulate by the process of oral transmission and their roots lie buried deep in the group life of the tribes. There are no fixed song-makers and no attempt is made to take credit for having discovered or improvised any songs. Most of the songs have come down from generations and performers learn them from their elders. The continuity of the old tradition is thus maintained.

It is true that over the years, particular songs tend to get slightly altered. This however does not happen by any conscious design. While reciting the songs, one or more of the performers may suddenly introduce a new phrase and it may catch on. The overall picture, is one of stability in the text and the formal structure of the songs does not change violently with time.

The poems or songs often accompany dances. The recitation of the words



Anonymity in the present structure of society, usually implies that the author is ashamed of his authorship or afraid of the consequences if he reveals himself; but in a primitive society, it is due to just the carelessness about the author's name.

and the movement of the body are the two co-ordinates of the graph of socio-religious and ritual action which they define and describe. Curt Sachs, the noted authority on primitive dance, has said, that for the primitive, dance was a means of control of his surroundings.

This endeavour to gain control over nature expressed itself through a psychological process of sympathetic transcreation. And the transcreation was a combination of bodily gestures, verbal symbolism and prescribed ritual action. For example, the Sarhul Festival of the Mundas is partly a vegetation ceremony and partly a fecundity ceremony. The ceremonial bath, the stacking of rice in baskets and the offering of rice beer to the village ancestors and using some of this rice for sowing is associated with fertility. The Sarhul procession is taken out to the village sarna. The pattern of dancing gets integrally related to the text and meaning of the song and the rituals accompanying it.

The anonymity of the song makers is a notable phenomenon in primitive societies. The absence of a written language makes the process of transmission of the songs with their complex structure of social and communal associations, an amazing phenomenon. For the arrangement of words, the stylistic pattern and the grouping of images remain vitally unchanged over the years and this is largely because of this unwritten, oral character. "Anonymity in the present structure of society", said Robert Graves, "usually implies that the author is ashamed of his authorship or afraid of the consequences if he reveals himself; but in a primitive society, it is due to just the carelessness about the author's name". This kind of carelessness is inherent in the primitive

mind for what is important for him is the song and not the song maker. To that extent he can be compared to the unknown artists, painters and sculptors, who in Konark, in Khajuraho and all the world over, have not left behind their names even while enriching the common heritage of mankind. The primitive mind does not know the emphasis on the ego, or the conceit of the author which the twentieth century has brought so much to the forefront. The lack of any personal aspiration and ambition for name and fame makes these songs so much more genuine and authentic.

The songs remain; the emotions they convey remain for the creator's sons and daughters and their offspring. What more could the primitive singer wish for himself! One moonlit night I was in a lonely tribal village of Orissa lost in the midst of dense forest. In the moonlight they danced and sang. Ancient, timeless songs. Old as the neighbouring hills, ancient as the moon. There were sprinklings of improvisations and interpolations from the new world growing up among them; the world of development blocks, jeeps, fertilizers, insecticides and birth-control pills. An old tribal sat by my side watching the dance, almost completely drunk and looking very lost. Suddenly he broke into song like a winter tree coming into leaf. I can still hear the soft agony of that ageless voice and song. Then I knew the tragedy inherent in the situation; the near impossibility of integrating the tribal people into the greater society while preserving intact their cultural autonomy and individuality.

It is only right that public policy should not treat them merely as museum specimens to be preserved, isolated and uncontaminated by modern society for study as "noble savages" by city scholars. But will not socio-economic integration for the tribes bring about a cultural anomie, a drying up of those sources of fullness of spirit, dark energy and exuberance that characterise much of the tribal way of life? Will not their own oral tradition of songs be either forgotten, despised or hybridised by treatment with insecticides and pills by their own younger generations? Will

not the more educated young men reject the very social milieu of which these songs and dances are symbols?

The world of oral poetry of Indian primitive tribes is an almost unexplored but vanishing world. Despite the efforts of a few scholars, hundreds of thousands of songs remain undocumented. And what is more important, with rapid socio-economic transformation they run the risk of dying out or distortion beyond recognition. Far too long have the songs, tales, mythologies, rituals and legends of the primitive tribes been

A time has come when it must be realised that, while we can speak of stages in technological growth, the same cannot be said of growth or efflorescence in the field of culture. There is no linear growth in the cultures of societies and all aspects of culture may not be susceptible to economic analysis.



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treated as mere ethnological data. In an age of the assumed superiority of economic analysis of ethnographic material, no wonder they are looked upon as somewhat residuary and unscientific and in any case, of only marginal interest to the social anthropologist. This situation is not peculiar to India. It is a worldwide phenomenon. The healthy attitude should be to see them, as Rothenberg observes, as a "series of communally structured and ecologically sound models from which to learn something about the re-organisation of society and the revitalisation of life and thought". A time has come when it must be realised that, while we can speak of stages in technological growth, the same cannot be said of growth or efflorescence in the field of culture. There is no linear growth in the cultures of societies and all aspects of culture may not be susceptible to economic analysis. And the word 'primitive' itself is somewhat a misnomer. The Aztecs and Mayas were also perhaps 'primitives' from this point of view.

Levels of culture are not proportionately related to levels of economies affluence, personal incomes or levels of consumption or the capacity of the individual as a waste-maker. Scientism, whether of economic or political anthropology, can be a fallacy if not seen in the perspective of social processes, personal responses, and interpersonal relationships. It is high time we realise the immense value of these songs and mythologies as literature per se. These oral poems are highly concrete in their treatment of theme and generally refer to some specific aspects of community life, its myth or symbolic structure. In a sense the entire community life of the tribal is a very intense and uniform symbolic milieu. There is therefore, no problem of communication, no difficulty of aesthetic distance that burdens so much of modern art and poetry. For us, the mythical universe is no longer a part of a living tradition in most urbanised communities. When attempts are made to resuscitate myth, there is a genuine risk of its appearing as part of cultural anthropology rather than literature. This, I believe, is the difficulty in Eliot's poetry.

The Waste Land goes back to the *Golden Bough* and *From Ritual To Romance*, but society no longer understands or is immersed in the living myths of the tribe. The difficulty of a return to myth and myth-oriented literature, so extensively attempted by Eliot and Pound is precisely this: the roots of social consciousness in the west are no longer in those fertile, dark and primitive unconscious realms. But to the Munda, the Oraon, the Kondh or the Paraja, myths are ever present realities.

In his preface to *The Empty Distance Carries*, an anthology of Munda and Oraon poetry edited by this author, the eminent British poet and critic David Holbrook observed: 'The songs and the illuminating comments on Oraon and Munda culture belong to a world wide struggle among people to try to find a sense of their identity, not in mere 'nationalistic' terms, but in terms of how, since they live 'in' their symbolism, they can find particular meanings and forms of 'authenticity' in their own lives, place and 'time'.

In the three decades since World War II one important trend in literature and the arts is a pervasive sense of loss of meaning, an inability to comprehend reality, a growing sense of rootlessness and non-belonging and an overwhelming feeling of blankness, pessimism and despair. Whatever the reasons, this mood has brought literature and art almost to the brink of an abyss, to a point where another step would commit us to nihilism, moral cynicism and the death instinct. The last five decades have possibly witnessed far greater revolutionary changes both in the structure of society and the material world than in any comparable period in human history. It was Pasternak who had cautioned us that in an age of speed we must think slowly. Unfortunately, our generation seems to have lost the capacity to think slowly and effectively. This mood in art and literature has its effect on style. There seems to be a growing devaluation of the need for cohesiveness and lucidity in expression; an almost pathological obsession that the medium employed by the artist is no longer effective to express his complex fate and therefore,



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true art today has to choose between silence or a form of broken expression that reflects a broken, distorted *gestalt*. This is a total negation of the validity of art and literature and their relevance to our times. Life is meaningful only as the arch of the rainbow whose extremities are hidden away in the unseen past and future, in the incomprehensible timelessness of death; only as a span of relationships bridging an endless ex-

pense of despair. Authenticity in art and literature, as also in life, consists of this ceaseless quest for what Martin Buber calls 'the significant other'.

In these societies there is poverty but no public squalor. A Santhal house, for example, is the last word in neatness and order. The delicately carved bamboo rods used by the Kondhs to keep their tobacco can be the envy of any artist. Tragedies abound but there is no disgust of life. There is no fashionable pessimism. In his introduction to *The Wooden Sword*, Edmund Leach refers to the Mundas, "They do not seek consolation for the inevitability of decay by looking forward to a blissful rebirth in an imaginary 'other world'. Renewal is here and now in this world, in the quickly fading blossom of the jungles and the adolescence of our own children". Life for the primitive tribes may be cruel and hard. Celebrations, festivals and joy, only briefly punctuate a life otherwise burdened with poverty, undernourishment and exploitation. But still, life is looked upon as an opportunity, and all activity as a thanksgiving for the beauty and sacredness of nature.

Many tribal songs have, no doubt, no purpose other than enjoyment; quite a number have an ostensible social or ritual purpose, but the largest number are concerned with the quest for beauty and holiness, of dreams and fantasies which transform the sordid ordinariness of daily existence into something rich and strange.

Some of the poem-songs of the tribals are of a narrative type; others refer to some significant mood, situation or emotion. Narrative poetry largely relates to the cosmology of the tribes, their historical origins and migrations. More important than these narrative poems are the poems associated with the festivals - running through the cycle of seasons and rituals like -- birth, naming ceremonies, attainment of puberty, marriage and death.

The most fascinating aspect of tribal poems is their symbolism. Symbolism in modern poetry is an attempt to look for the unfamiliar, the concrete and the strange in a world excessively devitalised by the drabness of familiarity and generalised abstractions. The

world we live in is not the symbolic world of the primitive. It is mapped out, connected, intelligible. A sense of awe and wonder is usually absent. For the primitive on the other hand, social communication is itself a part of the vast symbolic milieu in which he swims as fish. The strange and the unknown peer out of everything. In a sense, the entire linguistic structure is symbol. This can be illustrated by a Munda song:

*The mahul tree
Full of branches and leaves
How it made the paddy field look
lovely!
They are cutting away the mahul
tree.
You five brothers, save it, save it!*

Here, the subject is not at all the mahul tree. It is the girl who has been given away in marriage. The village will look desolate when she is gone. And 'they' are the members of the bridegroom's party. It is only a mock protest and a reference to the brother's role as the sister's defender in that society.

Tribal poems reveal an attitude of mind which is aware of pain, in fact, writhes in pain, but refuses to curse or run away into despair. Albert Camus once said that, "all great art extols and denies the world at the same time".

The invocatory songs of the Santhals and Kondhs are almost reminiscent of the Vedic rituals invoking prosperity and plenty for the community. For the tribals, the supernatural world, the world of spirits and *bongas* is as real as the natural world he lives in. There is a benign or evil god in the neighbouring hill, the flowing stream at the outskirts of the village, the sacred grove and even the domestic kitchen. These gods take an intimate interest in human affairs and their blessings have to be invoked by appropriate propitiatory devices. Here, poetry and ritual go hand in hand. In modern technological societies art has tended to oscillate between two extremes. It has either been treated as a packaged form of mass entertainment or as the concern of an increasingly small minority of elites that should more appropriately be termed,



'priesthood'. The production and consumption of various art forms in modern society are being regulated and controlled more and more by the economic gate-keepers, producers of films, reviewers and critics, stage managers and art gallery owners. In primitive societies, these economic gate-keepers are conspicuous by their absence. Art is wedded to life, it springs from love and it is woven into the structures of daily living. There is a continuous linkage between action and dream, between manual labour and art creation using one's intense imagination. The entire community participates in the joys and sorrows, triumphs and tragedies.

The role of art in a primitive community is to identify a cultural field. This is something akin to what Marcuse identifies as the sub-culture in present western society existing as the great refusal or the posture of defiance. The continuity and universality of a culture is assured in a small community. Cultural conflicts by way of formation of sub-cultures and contra-cultures is absent in such communities. Primitive poetry and art have a relevance not merely to literature but also to the quest for meaning and authenticity in the face of dehumanisation of the arts with the resurgence of the libido and death instinct in it. There is world-wide awareness today that human life must be brought back to the hidden intuitive exuberance and zest for living that characterised human imagination in many earlier centuries. In his *Age of Aquarius*, William Braden, speaking about the America of the future, poses the same question. Will it be blacker,

more feminine, more intuitive, more exuberant and just possibly better than the America of the past? "It depends", Braden answers, "on the outcome of the struggle between the humanist and the technologist, both bent on reshaping society in their own ways". There is an inherent conflict here. It is no longer possible to keep in separate compartments the sacred rituals and profane technologies, our moral fervor and scientific rationalism, but it is desirable to find a solution to the tension between what Braden describes as "those who wish to make the world a comfortable dwelling and those who conceive of it as a machine for progress".

The Indian primitive tribe world is immensely alien, not merely to the western world but even to the world of the urban elite in this country. The song-poems of the tribals may be action-packed ritual, but their beauty, freshness and occasional technical virtuosity remain to be envied. The emphasis is not on the alienness or strangeness of this world but on the naturalness and ease, simplicity and grace, the elegance and absence of anxiety.

I can't but conclude this note by quoting Brandon from his preface to *The Magic World: American Indian Songs and Poetry*: "All that we want from any of it is the feeling of poetry. Let the ethnologists keep its 'science' and the oncoming generation of Indian poets its mystery".

Excerpted and collated from Dr. Mahapatra's new publication, Unending Rhythms, -Oral Poetry of Indian Tribes, published by Inter-India Publications, Price Rs.350/

Illustrations are from the same book

Dr. Sitakant Mahapatra is a well known anthropologist and poet. He has edited eight anthologies of the oral poetry of Indian tribes. He was given the Homi Bhaba Fellowship to work amidst the tribes of Eastern India. Many awards were given to him, including the Sahitya Akademi Award, the Kumaran Asan poetry award and the Soviet Land Nehru Award. He has also been a fellow at the universities of Cambridge and Harvard.

The tribe is Munda, a proto-austrian people who have found a home on the Ranchi plateau in South Bihar, whose sub-tribes still roam the jungles of Madhya Pradesh in quest of flesh and food. The tree is the "Sal", known to botanists as *Shorea Robusta*, to the Munda and their ilk as *Sarjom*.

There are other trees that enter into the life of this tribe. Trees that are used in the religious cults of its members, that are a source of medicine to the Munda. None of these trees mean as much to the Munda as the Sal. Every part of this tree—trunk, bark and leaf—is intimately associated with the Munda in their life and ritual.

With no temples of their own, no shrines made with hands, no sacred edifices in brick and mortar, the Munda resort to groves of Sal for their religious functions. Every Munda village has such a grove—six or more Sal trees left standing by their forefathers, when first they wrested the jungle from snakes and tigers, and felled trees to make way for fields.

It is here, under these age-old trees, that the *Pahan* or tribal priest offers blood sacrifices to the tutelary spirits of the village. It is in the shadow of these trees that a new priest is initiated in cults, that go back to times when Aryan and Dravidian were seeking these shores. The welfare of the village has its origin in these trees, trees that have stood from times no man can recall.

Every March, when the Sal bursts into blossom, the Munda will gather in their groves, known to them as *Sarna*, to celebrate the *Baha Parob* or Festival of Flowers. They will return home bearing Sal flowers, which they will hang over the main entrance of their huts, there to wither and fade and mingle with the dust of the courtyard. The Sal must enter their homes first, and only then may the Munda bring other flowers into their huts.

When autumn gives way to winter, and the paddy droops in the fields, a Sal tree, indicated and daubed with

vermillion powder by the *Pahan*, will be felled by the Munda. That tree, and a sapling of Sal, will be raised on high, up to 16.24 m, and more, and tied to a

framework of four Sal posts. The sapling will be bound to the top of the Sal tree. On its tip will be fastened a framework, an umbrella, which will remain raised

A TRIBE AND A TREE

VICTOR ROSNER, S.J



THE EYE NO.5. VOL.1. SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1992

for 8 days in honour of Indra, the god of thunder and rain.

It is during this time the Munda will dance the *Ind*; such is the name of the raised tree with the sapling and umbrella.

A Munda will use no other timber for beams, posts, rafters and doors, other than the heart wood of Sal trees to build his house. Trees he has felled himself, and dressed with his axe and adze.

Marriage invitations come to you in the form of a Sal leaf which opens in your hand to expose some rice grains, spices and a bit of turmeric. Invitees, in turn, will bring their gifts of paddy, potatoes, and pulse in Sal leaf containers.

Marriage ceremonies among the Munda are always solemnized under a canopy of Sal saplings. These are cut on the morning of the marriage by men and boys who are fasting. These saplings known as *marwa* are brought into the courtyard of the bridegroom in solemn procession, preceded by musicians.

At a moment in the ceremonies, there is a letting of blood from the little finger of the right hand of the bridegroom first, and from the same finger of the bride. The few drops of blood are caught in the soft inner bark taken from one of the Sal saplings of the marriage canopy. This blood-stained inner bark will be used to hold the silver coin with which the bridegroom will anoint the bride with vermilion powder. The bride in turn will anoint the groom with her blood-stained bark.

Both bride and bridegroom will sit on newly fashioned stools covered with Sal leaf platters. Guests quaff rice beer in Sal leafcups. They eat from Sal leaf-containers.

Divorce is signified among the Mundas by the rite of *Sakam Chari*—the tearing of the Sal leaf. This is done in the village *panchayat*. The president of the meeting hands a Sal leaf to one of the three members, representing the party suing for divorce. If the Sal leaf is taken and torn from petiole to tip along the mid-rib, the divorce suit is granted. The marriage is dissolved.

In the event of a second marriage, after the death of one of the partners, the anointing with vermilion powder is done on the forehead of the widower if

Marriage ceremonies among the Mundas are always solemnized under a canopy of Sal saplings. These are cut on the morning of the marriage by men and boys who are fasting. These saplings known as marwa are brought into the courtyard of the bridegroom in solemn procession, preceded by musicians.

the bride is marrying for the first time. If she is a widow, she anoints a Sal leaf to signify her consent to this second marriage.

A span in length, a palm in width, strong and durable, the Sal leaf is an all-purpose article in a Munda household. Sal leaves serve for cups and containers, platters and plates of various sizes for rice and pulses, curry, chutney and chillies, salt and seasoning. Sal leaves are Munda's cruets and crockery for dinner dates and everyday meals. In every Munda household there are always Sal leaves at hand, fresh, clean, brilliant, ready for service.

To give these leaves shape and form is the duty of the women in the home. It is for them to pluck the leaves, stitch them with tiny bamboo silvers, pass them round at meals.

Sal leaves serve their purpose in everyday life. They have use in magical rites. Divination is done by reading the sick and the harassed. Some sorcerers use one leaf, some two, which are smeared with oil and rubbed against each other, then parted and the signs read in the smears.

There are witchfinders who use Sal branches covered with leaves and planted round a tank of water. They base their pronouncements on the withering of these leaves, and the position the branches occupy—north, south, east, west.

The sorcerer, who has power over the spirits that plague men, women, children, cattle and crops, imprisons

them in cones of iron, or he confines them in Sal leaf cones. There is a hierarchy in evil spirits known to every Munda who is an animist. Spirits, thus treated, are either relegated to a stream, or buried in waterlogged paddy fields.

The blood of victims, in sorcery rites, is always collected in single Sal leaf-cups. Such a leaf must be perfect in every way, the mid-rib must remain whole and entire.

The colours used for magical designs are held in Sal leaf-containers. It is from these cups that the sorcerer will take up the coloured dust to depict his circles and semicircles, his squares and rectangles.

Admittance into the *Dhumkuria*, or village dormitory, is effected by dropping a Sal leaf-container, holding flesh shot during the great Spring Hunt, at the door of the boy who would enter the Communal Dormitory. From that day to the day of his marriage, he is a member of this exclusive club of Munda bachelors.

The last service a Sal leaf will render a Munda is to be the cup from which a few drops of water will be dropped into his mouth after death. When his body is laid to rest, Sal saplings will form a chamber within the tomb. The last service of a tree for a member of its tribe.

Illustration : Oroon Kumar



A SELECTION OF SONG-POEMS

BIRHOR

*The thorns are all in the courtyard.
Do not beat the leaves,
We have to eat our food friend
From these same leaves,*

*We are a very big family
Do not dust your leaves, friends,
We have to eat our food
From these same leaves.*

(NOTE: The "thorns" are thin sticks from the bark of the *katkom cherech* (crab thorn) found in the hilly ravines with which the leaf plates made from *sal* leaves are "stitched". The Birhors do not waste these leaves, using them again and again).

BIRHOR LOVE SONG

*I was going down the road
And you said that you would keep me.
You laughed and joked,
And then you left me.*

*You have married and brought me
Without spending any money,
And you say you will take me to eat figs
Beside the river!*

*I will not take sweets, brother.
Give me what my youth desires,
Then I will buy a scarf for you*

POIGNANT MOMENTS IN A FOOD GATHERER'S EXISTENCE.

*On the banks of the river
There is a fallen silk cotton flower,
The jackal has come to the red flower
Thinking it is meat!
Run away you fool
This is only a flower.*

*My cockbird is up in the tree
Well beyond your reach.
We shall plough the hard ground,
Again and again.*

*When the khaira nala has been ploughed,
Then there will be stomachful for all.*

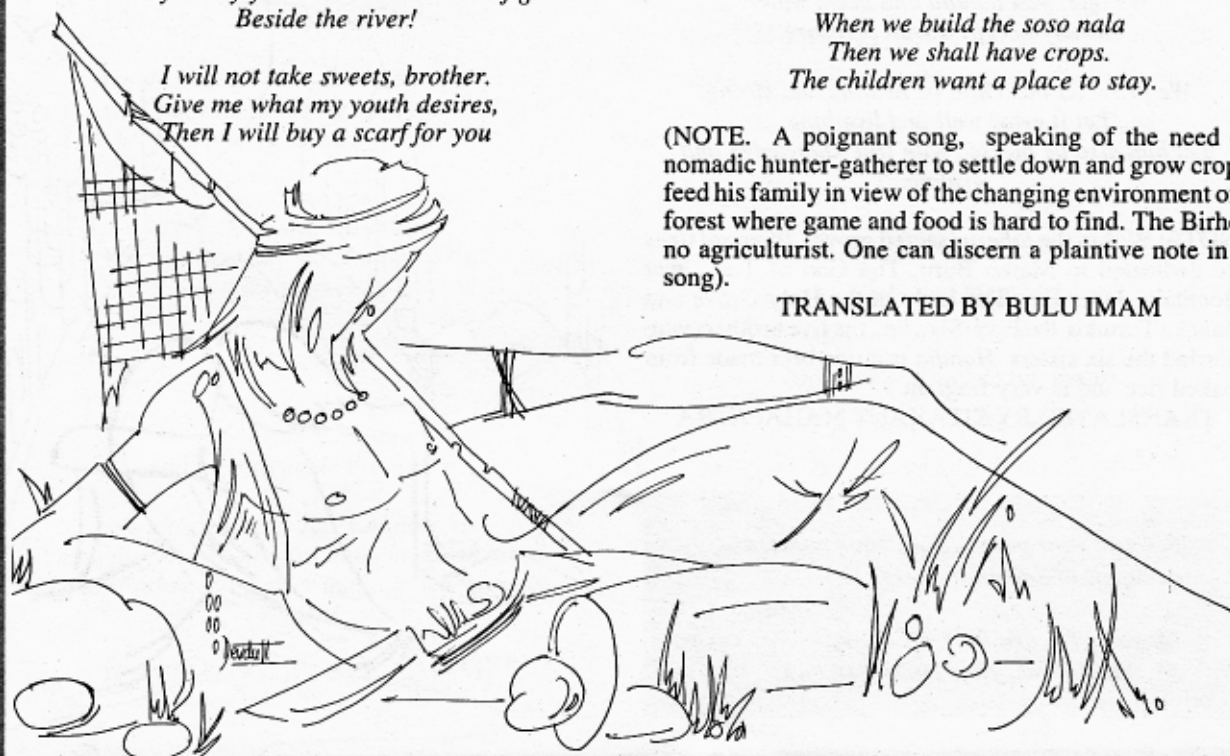
*To grow the gram and khesari dal
Let water flow and gram and khesari will grow.*

*Plant the gram and khesari beside the river
Then flood them with water and they will grow.*

*When we build the soso nala
Then we shall have crops.
The children want a place to stay.*

(NOTE. A poignant song, speaking of the need of a nomadic hunter-gatherer to settle down and grow crops to feed his family in view of the changing environment of the forest where game and food is hard to find. The Birhor is no agriculturist. One can discern a plaintive note in this song).

TRANSLATED BY BULU IMAM



SANTHALI

ASADIA BONGA

*Salutations to you, Mother Jaher era.
On the occasion of the Asadia festival we offer to you
young fowls and freshly husked rice.
Kindly accept them.*

*We pray to you:
Bring us rain-bearing clouds
And make our fields fit for cultivation.*

*With rain waters wash away
The insects and germs that cause disease.
Let not snakes and scorpions harm us
As we work in the fields weeding out grass.*

*When our cattle and goats
And sheep sometimes eat up the crops by mistake
Be kind to us and make them grow again.
Be kind to us that we may live in peace and happiness
And that our desires and expectations be fulfilled.*

CACO CATIAR NIMDAH

*Salutation to you, Maran Buru
On the occasion of the naming of this new-born baby
We offer you handia and neem water.
Kindly accept it with pleasure.*

*We pray: let this child be healthy and strong.
Let it grow well and live long.
Let him also be blessed with true knowledge and
wisdom.*

(NOTE: Within the jahera (sacred grove), three sal trees are dedicated to Maran Buru, The God of The Great Mountain, Jaher Era, The Lady of the Holy Grove and Maneka Turuiko, the Five-Six, i.e., the five brothers who married the six sisters. Handia is a rice beer made from soaked rice and is very fragrant.)

TRANSLATED BY SITAKANT MAHAPATRA

*Send in your poems, with your name, age,
occupation and address, to:*

*Mayura Tewari, Poetry Editor,
39, Anand Lok, New Delhi-110 049*

*On the Duduri road
The sand is like the lotus.
The Duduri road's sand
Is like the storm.*

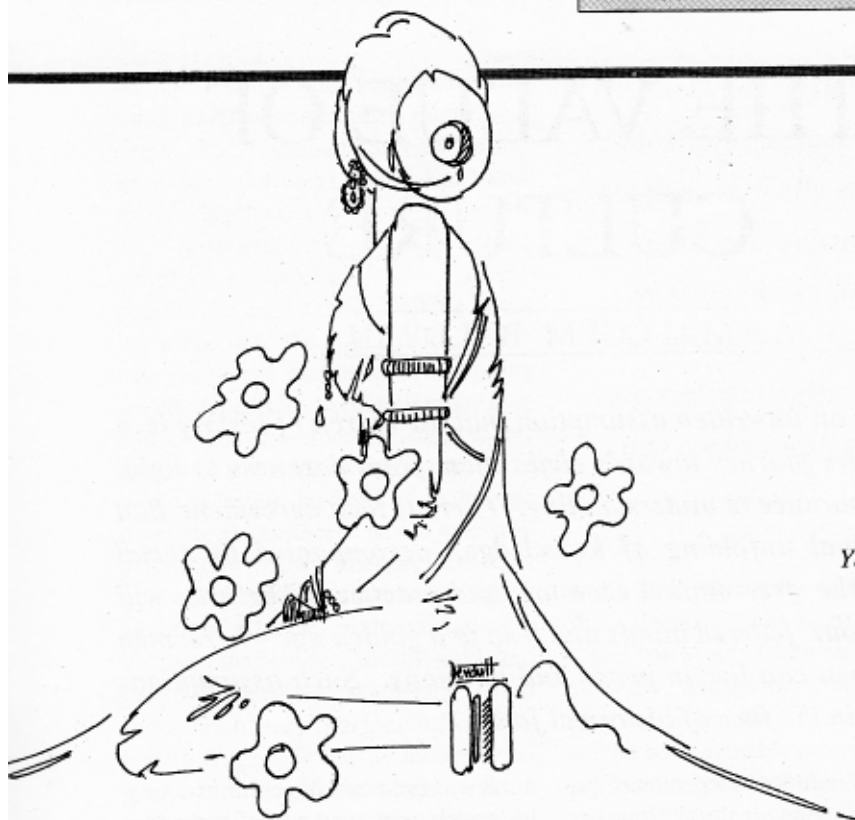
*In the middle of the road,
In the middle of the jungle
The sun has set.
O Duduri road, where will we sleep?
Where shall we make our morning?
Where shall we find a dwelling place?*

*Where God made house and home,
There in the jungle we will sleep.
Under the God-given trees and shade.
There we both will make our sleep.
There we both will make our sleep.*

*And there we will make our morning.
And there we will make our morning.*

TRANSLATED BY BULU IMAM





LOVE-SONGS

*Along the banks of the river,
Along the banks of the river
I found, Oh, I found a flower!
But ahead was my husband,
And behind my brother-in-law:
Friend, how can I pluck this flower?*

*On the top of the wedding canopy,
Under the wedding canopy,
Who sang a song as wide as the sky?*

*We, brothers, all the Hansda girls
Cooled the warm clouds.
We, brothers, all the Hansda girls,
Cooled the warm clouds.*

*Father made the ridge,
And he also made the dam.*

*He planted many types of flowers.
Which flower do you want, daughter? he asked.
I want, Father, the flower that adorns the body,
I replied.*

TRANSLATED BY BULU IMAM.

SONGS OF DEATH

*What is the life of man!
Only a pot of water.
A small leak
And all the water is gone.*

*You hold the bow and arrow, little boy
You hold the axe and the sickle
But death will not care
Some day it will come.*

*This joy and happiness in life
Only for a few days
To be in love with others
Only for a few days
When we turn back and leave
No one accompanies.*

*When the flowers wither, fruits stay on the trees
When dry leaves fall, the young leaves still smile.
I have travelled from village to village
And yet cannot find my father.*

*Do not cry dear, do not shed tears.
He had to go
Maran Buru wished it so.
Do not cry dear, do not weep
The warm sun, the forests
The village and its people
Are all with you.*

TRANSLATED BY SITAKANT MAHAPATRA

Illustrations by Devdutt Pattanaik

M Even as I write, human rights abuses are commonplace in over 100 countries of the world. In 1981, 2000 people sought political asylum in Britain; ten years later that figure had risen to 25,000. Every minute of every day people are brought low, made miserable, degraded, tortured and killed. There is not a method of abjection or of pain which is not being practised at this minute somewhere on earth. The majority of recipients are either ethnic minorities whose cultural wisdom is at odds with western notions of progress, or where cultural identity clashes across ill-defined frontiers. It seems at this late stage of the twentieth century that the pace and intent of barbarism is dramatically increasing, and it brings into sharp focus precisely what we mean by the word 'civilization'.

This year the West celebrated the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America. In 1492 the Spanish explorer, Christopher Columbus sailed the Atlantic ocean and brought European culture to the Americas. Of course, this was not the first time that tribal peoples had been overwhelmed by powerful outside forces, but it serves to illustrate just how thin the veneer of civilisation can be. At this stage in history, it was perceived that European culture, underpinned by Christianity, was right and good, and that all other civilisations lived in outer darkness—an attitude which still persists in varying forms. Having exiled the 'alien' culture to the status of sub-human savages beyond the hope of Christian redemption, it was then morally acceptable to plunder the newly discovered territories.

The historian Clive Ponting points out that "advanced and culturally secure societies such as India and China survived best, although they eventually succumbed in differing degrees to European political, military and economic power. (Only Japan was

able to maintain its independence politically and economically)." However, where the newly discovered territory was less developed, (in an economic and military sense), gross exploitation occurred. Santo Domingo was one of the first islands in the New World to be discovered by Columbus, and at the time of the Spanish conquest, supported a native population of a million people. Within forty years, only a few hundred remained. The ravages of slavery, cruelty, disease and cultural disorientation had taken their toll.

In 1502, scenes of utter depravity were witnessed by Bartolome de Las Casas who arrived in Hispaniola. On one day he records that the Spanish committed such acts of cruelty "as no age can parallel". According to his journal, some 3000 indigenous people were mutilated, raped and killed. Nursing babies were fed to the dogs whilst young children trying to escape had their legs cut from under them. Boiling soap was poured on other victims, and bets were made on the possibilities of cutting people in half with one sweep of a sword. Las Casas describes the carnage as "a continuous recreational slaughter". It is deeply disturbing that history records the cul-

tural achievements of centuries alongside such persistent acts of barbarism.

Sanctioned by God and driven by greed, the early Spanish colonialists conquered the Aztec civilisation in 1519. Assuming racial and cultural superiority, backed by military strength (and alien diseases), they reduced the population of Mexico from 25 million people to one million in less than a century.

Such examples can be multiplied where the lethal combination of assumed superiority backed by military

THE VALUE OF CULTURE

MALCOLM BALDWIN

There is an unwritten assumption that the march of history is a progressive journey towards civilisation, from darkness to light, from ignorance to understanding. There is tacit agreement that the gradual unfolding of knowledge, accompanied by social justice, the free market economy and practice of the arts will liberate our fettered minds and lead to a golden age where men and women can live in peace and harmony. Such assumptions often fly in the face of historical facts.

In 1492 the Spanish explorer, Christopher Columbus sailed the Atlantic ocean and brought European culture to the Americas. Of course, this was not the first time that tribal peoples had been overwhelmed by powerful outside forces, but it serves to illustrate just how thin the veneer of civilisation can be.

strength comes into conflict with tribal peoples and ethnic minorities. From the Australian outback to the Brazilian rainforests, from Kurdistan to Kampuchea, similar sorry stories are repeated. As a consequence, either by accident or design, whole peoples are on the move, asking nothing more than the right 'to be'. Yet every day, the claims of civilisations are challenged by persistent reports of ethnic hatred, murderous neglect, and ferocious reversals to barbarism. Our world is being depleted of its human diversity and cultural wisdom precisely at a time in history when western culture considers itself to be reaching the zenith of tolerance and civilisation.

Since the demise of the Soviet Union, the savagery which has so characterised European history is beginning to manifest itself again. Some two million refugees are fleeing from ethnic strife in former Yugoslavia, whilst potential trouble is brewing all over Eastern Europe. All this serves as a grim reminder of the not too distant past when, less than fifty years ago, the abyss of ethnic barbarism was reached in Nazi Germany in the 1930's and the 1940's.

The guiding principles of the Nazi party were sustained on ethnic hatred. Hitler's command devised plans for a Thousand Year Reich which would ultimately conquer the world. Based wholly on the assumed superiority of the 'true Aryan race', it was designed that white, blond-haired people would take control of the world. His plans for Russia included the flooding of Moscow and forcing near servility on the Russian people. Dark-skinned people were to be relegated to outer darkness, beyond the influence of civilisation. But it was for European Jews that the Nazis reserved their most venomous plans.

For centuries, Jewish people in Europe had been subject to Christian persecution in various forms. The Nazis simply enhanced already existing anti-semitic sentiments, and eventually devised an end to the 'Jewish problem' known as 'The Final Solu-

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tion'. Throughout the Second World War, European Jews were herded into cattle trucks and taken on highly efficient rail transports to concentration camps. There they were forced to endure unimaginable torments. At one such camp known as Aushwitz, huge gas chambers, disguised as shower rooms, killed unnumbered thousands of men women and children. In a horrific parody of industrial efficiency, gold dental fillings were removed from the corpses, hair was cut off, and at times, even the skin was removed to make lampshades. Then the corpses were burnt in gigantic incinerators, worked by fellow Jewish inmates of the camp, blackmailed into such a position by imminent threats of torture to their loved ones.

When the allies liberated the camps in 1945, language failed to describe the scenes of horror that awaited them. Humankind's vilest imaginings had been made reality. Conservative estimates say that six million Jews died in

the hell holes of Aushwitz, Treblinka, Dachau, and Belsen.

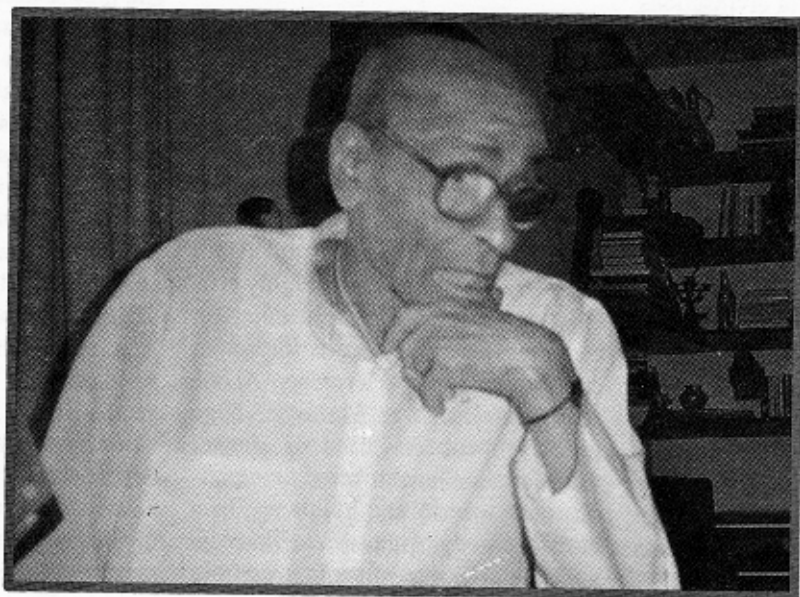
The Jewish writer, George Steiner urges that following these events we now need to re-define precisely what is meant by the word 'culture'. He points out that the top echelons of the Nazi party were extremely cultured men. They could play Bach and Vivaldi, and play it well. They even spared the Jewish musicians in the concentration camps to form orchestras. Moreover the German high command hoarded the art treasures of Europe, as much for aesthetic pleasure as financial gain. They could recite the poetry of Goethe and Rilke, and understand its inner meanings. Yet, from this background of high cultural values came the depths of depravity, beyond understanding.

Little is understood of the precise psychological mechanisms which engender racial hatred, or cause tribal minorities to be denied even the most basic human rights. Few politicians have ever seriously tackled the tragic divides between Catholic and Protestant, Muslim and Hindu, Palestinian and Jew. Even less is known about the systematic destruction of tribal people in the Amazon basin or Indonesia. One key to understanding is possibly the fact that conflict normally arises where two separate mythologies collide, where inflexible and bigoted ideologies come into contact with each other. Until we begin to break this iron fetter of ideology, and get inside the minds and skins of other people, there is little hope that the history of the 21st century will not repeat the barbaric past.

Malcolm Baldwin is a gifted teacher, writer and a dedicated environmentalist. Born in the U.K., he has a B.Ed degree from the university of Sussex. He has worked in Theatre and as film editor mainly for the BBC TV. He has been cameraman and director for several BBC productions. He is deeply committed to organisations such as Green Peace, Friends of the Earth, Environmental Investigation Agency and has produced Environmental educational material. He is currently employed with the Centre for Alternate Technology in Wales.

THE DEPARTED MAESTRO

MALLIKARJUN MANSOOR



Mallikarjun Mansoor's departure from the world has created a lull that may not pass for some years to come.

SHARADA RAMANATHAN

Hailing from a musical family from Mansoor, a village in Karnataka, Mallikarjun's heart was in music. As a child of seven, he ran away from home to join his brother in a Kannada theatre company. His childhood audience savoured him in the role of child Krishna as much as they delighted in his singing. Even then, the convergence of musical styles took place in his musical mind. He was exposed to the Carnatic tradition by one Aiyappa Swamy (a *vainika* in the Thanjavur tradition). His music master, Pandoka, however, in the theatre company, had studied the Hindustani *khayal*. It was here that Mallikarjun met his first guru, Neelakanta Bua, a

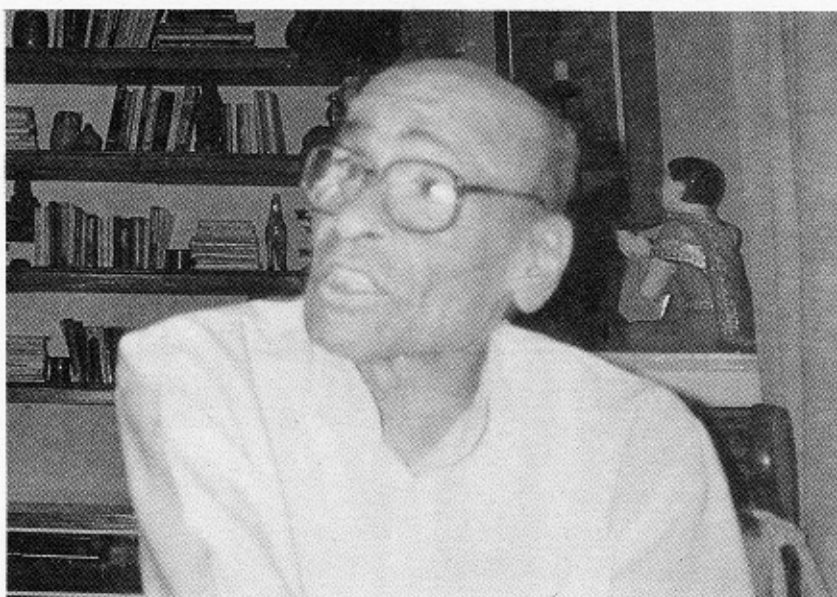
Mallikarjun Mansoor was a musician's musician. His music was his 'manodharma', a statement of his life and living and all that he stood for. His life story reads like a simple folk tale with its unspoken moments of spirit, inspiration and learning.

disciple of the legendry Balakrishna Bua.

Neelakanta Bua (who was Pandoka's guru) spotted the special

talent in Mansoor when he attended a theatrical performance on the invitation of Pandoka. He took Mansoor away to his village, Miraj, a historically important place in Hindustani music. Mansoor lived there for about seven years and trained in the *gayaki* style of the Gwalior *gharana*, in the ideal milieu of the *guru-shishya parampara*. In this childless home, Mansoor was nurtured as a disciple and son by the Buas.

Mallikarjun commenced his performing career at the age of twenty. He was invited to cut his first 78 rpm disc in 1931 by the HMV manager who had heard him perform in Bhagalkot. Mansoor sang *Gaurmalhar* and *Adana* for his maiden recording. The record



was successful, and Mansoor began to perform more frequently at *pujas*, *mehfils*, and over the radio.

Mansoor's searching spirit was not satiated with this initial success. In a fortunate coincidence, he chanced upon his second guru Manjhi Khan Saheb at the jewellery shop of his old-time friend, Vishnupanth Phagnis, himself a theatre and film actor.

Manjhi Khan, the second son of Alladiya Khan was an extremely giving teacher. He had faith that Mansoor would carry the mantle of the Jaipur-Atrauli *gharana*, with his non-*tawaif*, non-*gharana* background and extraordinary calibre. When Manjhi Khan met with a fatal accident soon after, his wish that Mansoor be placed under Alladiya Khan's tutelage was buried with him.

Afflicted by anti-campaigns by the practitioners of the Jaipur-Atrauli *gharana*, Mansoor returned to Dharwad a depressed man. Six months later, his musical urge took him to Bombay, where he appealed to Alladiya Khan to teach him. But Alladiya, being the seniormost and busiest of them all, sent Mansoor to his third son, Bhurji Khan.

Unlike Manjhi Khan, Bhurji Khan was a greater teacher than a performer. His disciples included Mogubai and Menkabai, the mothers of Kishori

Amonkar and Shoba Gurtu. On Bhurji Khan's request, the young Mansoor picked up the *tanpura* and sang in *Gaur Sarang*. Within minutes, his singing had gripped the attention of everybody, and Bhurji Khan, who was keeping time on the *tabla*, was silently crying. He was moved by the memory of Manjhi Khan, whose presence Mansoor had evoked so poignantly by his singing.

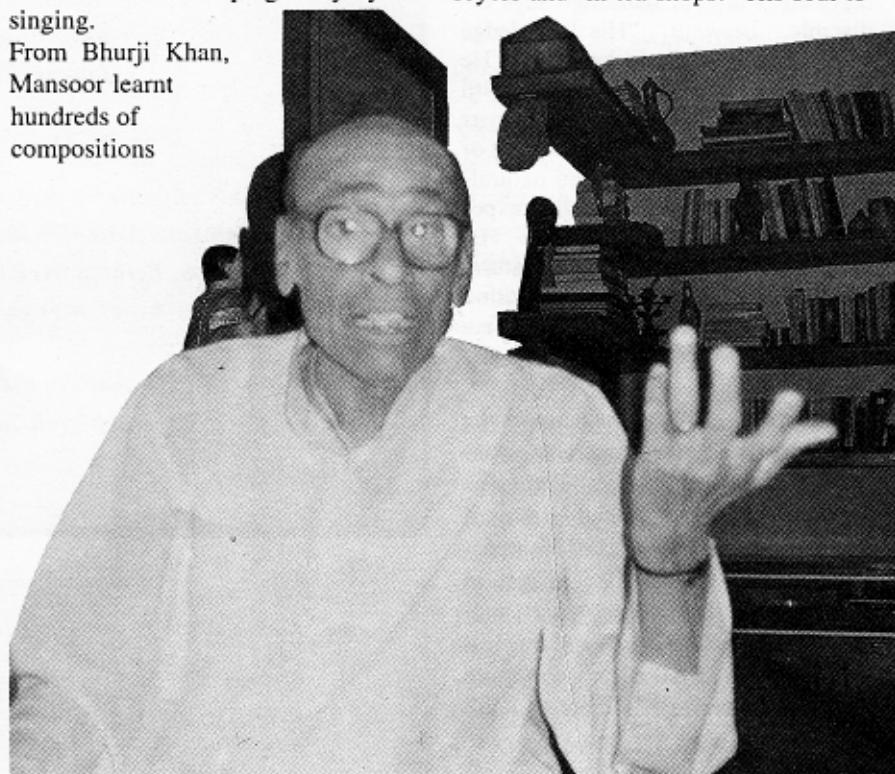
From Bhurji Khan, Mansoor learnt hundreds of compositions

in ragas like *Dhanashri*, *Triveni*, *Patmanjari*, *Lachhasakh*, *Ram Sakh*, *Devsakh*, *Bhavsakh*, a wide variety of *Todis*, *Bilavals*, *Malhars*, *Kanharas* etc. He was also fine-tuned in *layakari* (rhythmic acumen), and the finer distinctions between rare ragas.

Mansoor continued to learn from Bhurji Khansaheb till the latter's demise. He subsequently learnt scores of compositions from Bhurji Khan's son, Azizuddin, affectionately known as Baba. "We never really comprehended the musical language of Baba" says Mansoor's disciple, Kalidas. "Guruji and Baba shared a deep understanding which came from Guruji's immersion in the music of that family."

Mallikarjun Mansoor was first and foremost a performer, and was responsible in giving a new meaning to the dimensions of performance.

To Mansoor, each performance was an expression of his musical experience, an expression of his individual and intimate meaning for life. "Panditji has performed in the proscenium, in hotel lobbies, in theatre foyers and in tea shops!" His soul to



plays based on the Ramayana. "One should not leave the *parampara*, but one does have to look ahead", says he. In the same mode he has tried his hand at producing Bertolt Brecht's, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* in the Therukoothu *bani*. He has also dealt with several themes based on contemporary society. "Kannappa has attempted to reintroduce the *sutradhar* of old traditional Sanskrit drama in the framework of Therukoothu. Called the *kattiyakaran*, this character not only provides the links in the play, but also makes queries which, when answered remove doubts that arise in the minds of the audience and underscores the play's philosophies."

The main problem is that of attracting and keeping young talent. Pointing to Raghavan, a young actor, Kannappa says, "He came to us seven years ago as a raw youngster. We trained him to be competent actor. But now the world outside already beckons with all its glamour. He wants a job that pays him better". This is the crux of the problem facing this old traditional form. The art is still relevant to the people of the village; it still entertains them hugely; but the crowds that flock to see are not capable of spending the kind of money that can financially sustain the group. So, says Kannappa, "We have to travel far and wide giving performances, and take up part-time jobs to supplement our income from theatre. But, once an actor, always an actor. And you are labelled. Nobody is willing



Kannapa Thambiran



Leela Venkataraman is an acknowledged expert on dance, having written extensively on the subject. She is the Dance Critic of a leading newspaper, THE HINDU. She lives in Delhi. Photographs Courtesy: Sangeet Natak Akademi.

to think of you as capable of doing any other type of work. We have no one in the family to continue this tradition. That is why we want to start this school. The potential of street theatre is being recognised more and more. It is important to allow to allow the old masters to do what they feel and pursue their creative instincts. Any doctoring or interference from outside can easily result in slick productions devoid of the passion and conviction of traditional repertoire".

Meanwhile, to wed contemporary sensibility to ancient tradition without mangling its inner power is what the Parambarai Therukoothu Manram is attempting. However, the most disconcerting thought in Kannappa's mind is who will carry on the tradition that he inherited from his forefathers. Will it die the death of so many of our traditions? Or will it be so incredibly mutated that we will be required to coin a new name for it?

*"Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it.
Boldness has genius, power and magic in it."*

WHY BUSINESS MEN WEAR DARK SUITS



DAVID EDWARDS

Standardisation of dress screams the death of diversity and the birth of a new culture clad in the monotonous sartorial demands of modern development. This new culture blankets the whole world in grey and black. One economy, one world view, one culture. One has only to look around in one's cities. Dull colours tumbling out of buses, emerging from skyrisers, clutching dull briefcases. This 'dark suit syndrome' has hit our men in particular, and we need only to link this with their participation in modern business for much longer than women. Whatever happened to our vibrant natural hues worn with such elegance by our village brethren? The author makes an insightful and penetrating sketch of the 'Dark Suit' and its relationship with modern business.

Have you ever wondered just why it is that all businessmen wear essentially black or dark-grey suits? After all, it is not just in the City of London but in all the towns and cities of the world that businessmen are to be found wearing this particular colour of clothing. This can hardly be a coincidence. But if it is not a coincidence, what is it? What does this rather sombre and impersonal uniform represent? I say uniform because, as you will know if you have worked as an executive in a modern company, there is little or no option but to wear a dark suit (or its cultural equivalent) at work. Rather, there is a generally enforced conviction amongst business people that, in order to be credible as business people, they must wear a dark suit. But why? To answer this, we first need to take a look at the nature of modern business.

Business, as executed by modern companies, is a matter of generating maximum revenue at minimum cost in minimum time. This is the absolute goal of modern business. Again, I use the word 'absolute' advisedly: maximum profit generation for the modern company is the final, absolute, unconditional reason for being. By implication, this means that all other goals are secondary and justifiable only in terms of their contribution to the absolute goal of profit. Thus, all recruitment, training, accommodation, administration, advertising, production, storage, profit-sharing - all aspects of company activity - are justifiable only to the extent to which these contribute to the absolute goal. Any activity compromising or conflicting with that goal is not, in company terms, justifiable.

Interestingly, this logic applies as much to human behaviour as it does to everything else. All human behaviour at work is justifiable only to the extent to which it serves the absolute goal. As human beings, we have, of course, any number of idiosyncratic ways, needs and desires. As human beings at work, that is, as "the human resource" we must, if we are to remain in

employment, exercise only those qualities which contribute towards the absolute goal. Thus, we may have a keen sense of humour, be exceptionally creative, sincere and open, deeply thoughtful, a captivating and flamboyant extrovert, artistic, musical, mystical, magical. Yet, at work, if these qualities do not contribute to the absolute goal, they are not justifiable and cease to exist. As Erich Fromm said: "As with any other commodity it is the market which decides the value of human qualities, yes, even their very existence. If there is no use for the qualities a person offers, he has none". (*The Fear of Freedom*).

How many thousands of sincere and sympathetic managers have found themselves censured for having too much of a "soft touch", too "weak", not "tough" enough to ensure maximum efficiency? How many extroverts have been declared too "relaxed", too "laid-back"? The list goes ever on. Company work demands a particular style of monoculture human being—a dedicated and obsessive resource maximiser, an aggressive revenue generator, a hell-for-leather time-manager. All the other nuances and textures that go to make up unique, real, individual human beings are just so much "spare fat" to be separated and junked, leaving only the absolute, goal-oriented executive and employee—concerned with nothing but the job-in-hand, side-tracked by no other compromising interests.

And, so, businessmen wear dark, essentially black or grey, suits. The characteristic quality of black is, after all, that it absorbs all colours of the spectrum. In the business context, this property, together with the impersonal style that goes with it, is symbolic of the primacy of the absolute goal of professional profit-orientation (black) and the absorption and subordination of all secondary, compromising human goals and values (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet). There is no colour, no individuality, no distracting "spare fat" for



Businessmen wear dark - essentially black or grey - suits. The characteristic quality of black is, after all, that it absorbs all colours of the spectrum. In the business context, this property, together with the impersonal style that goes with it, is symbolic of the primacy of the absolute goal of professional, profit-orientation (black) and the absorption and subordination of all secondary, compromising human goals and values.

idiosyncratically human "baggage".

"Being 'employed', he is not an active agent, has no responsibility except the proper performance of the isolated piece of work he is doing...Nothing more is expected from him, or wanted from him" (*The Sane Society*—Erich Fromm).

The dark suit represents the stifling of the individual human being and his or her replacement by the uniform company automation. The fact that not all women are expected to wear this symbolic clothing says more about the inherently patronising attitude of business towards women than it does about their freedom from its logic.

The point is that there is no room for compromise in the essentially fanatical system of profit-orientation. Compromise is failure. "Success", for a modern company, is defined only in terms of profitability. It is not defined in terms of profitability and staff happiness, or profitability and the preservation of the environment. As a consequence, modern companies are extraordinary places to work in: they are cold, dull, hard, stressful, inhuman places. They are places that operate according to a logic that lies beyond normal human judgements of morality. As Sydney Smith said: "You never expected justice from a company, did you? They have neither a soul to lose, nor a body to kick". (*Memoirs*).

As David Jack, ex-head of research at Glaxo Pharmaceuticals recently said of their current Chairman, Paul Giarolamo:

"I can tell you quite frankly he doesn't have any great regard for scientists, or for science as a way of living. His whole purpose is to make money. I don't think there is much folly in his mind about doing good." (*Independent*)

This economic evolutionary system tends to throw up the sort of heartless creatures found skulking at the top of our corporate trees.

"The numerous horror stories of corporate behaviour in the Third World which have emerged in recent years show convincingly that respect for people, for nature, and for life are not part of the corporate mentality. On the contrary, large-scale corporate crime is today the most widespread and least prosecuted criminal activity" (*The Turning Point*—Fritjof Capra).

How can drug companies like the

Upjohn Corporation market drugs with proven psychotic side-effects like the Halcyon sleeping-pill? How could it be that western corporations have sold \$300 billion worth of arms fuelling the one hundred and twenty-five global conflicts over the past thirty years (all in the third world) at the cost of twenty-two million lives? How can companies like ICI aggressively export ozone-destroyers to the Third World, when ozone depletion of between 30 and 40 percent has been predicted for Europe this decade? How can it be that the US-led consortium of vested fossil-fuel

interests continue to insist on a "wait and see" approach to global warming, when all climate models agree that global warming will happen between 10 and 100 times faster than living systems have ever experienced while man has walked the earth? To answer these questions we need only look to the absolute and unconditional goals of modern business.

For the truth is that the goals of these companies and their economic systems are as much a blight on mankind as on the environment, with their dark logic insisting that profit-

ability is somehow more important than the well-being of people and the continued survival of human life. ●

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KEEPING THE LAW

RAGHAVA R. MENON

We must know by now, after forty years and little more of independence, that Law does not come naturally to the Indian ethos. We are a people who have lived very successfully through Custom. It has worked exceedingly well for us for the many thousands of years that we have been around.

The identifying characteristic of living through custom is that it changes from place to place and often in ever tightening circles making custom change from family to family. Custom has another noticeable characteristic, and that is the fact that it is always applied creatively and personally in each situation; and within the area where it applies, it is naturally assumed to be valid and right. Curiously enough, this impressionistic approach to social life worked surprisingly well. One proof of the success of living through custom is the fact that we have displayed incredible tenacity as a people and endured for thousands of years as a very markedly recognisable entity, complete in all respects. Also, very few people will deny that as a general rule, we have given less trouble to man everywhere as a whole, have been involved in fewer wars and revolutions, murder and mayhem than many other people whether for religious reasons or the usual excuses of bloodlust and power.

The main reason, it would seem why Indians have rarely gone on marauding exercises, trying to bring the good word to other people and 'civilising' them was because as a people we have been exceptionally secure within ourselves. We allowed all religions to come into India, to establish

We allowed all religions to come into India, to establish themselves in the country not because we were merely a tolerant people as is generally believed. For tolerance is only a symptom of something much larger than a predilection.

themselves in the country not because we were merely a tolerant people as is generally believed. For tolerance is only a symptom of something much larger than a predilection. We were always seen as a tolerant people because we truly did not care what any one preached or believed. Our own religious inheritance had very little to do with mere belief or a pathetic dependence on a set of man-made dogmas. We seemed to have known that people believed according to their natures. That was all. Those who believed in a flat earth were as welcome as those who believed in a round one. It simply made no difference. The Indian knew that there was no accounting for peoples' tastes in matters of God or beliefs. It was their private affair along with black cats crossing their paths or ladders under which they will not walk.

Then suddenly came the notion of Nation, a very modern thing no doubt. There were many in India who thought that if any one could believe in the concept of nation as an objective reality, he could also believe in the *burqa*, in the infallibility of the Pope, or the power of an ordained priest to forgive the sins of other people, or of requiring to pray five times or never.

Finally, I expect we seemed a tolerant people and survived by the unflinching evidence that human be-

ings carry their journey through life towards truer knowledge and greater freedom, and the proven knowledge that every one dies alone. The feeling also that it is possible for each of us to choose our own path to truer freedom or a greater bondage, and that this was nobody's business but our own, and whether there are eight hundred millions of us, or just one, made no difference to this reality.

When we went modern, (it would now seem, almost by inattention), we were suddenly required to behave as though what we had decided to do was right for all. That was how Law came into our lives. The rule of Law. We suddenly found that when we did exactly what we liked and how we liked as long as what we did agreed with the custom of our family or the village where we lived, we had broken a law. This astonished us beyond belief. What Law?

We must not forget that Law in this sense was brought to us by the British. We also know that it was with the coming of the British that we date our participation in a new kind of life. For they gave us everything we call life today in all its implications, both personal and public. We are sensitive about this situation, for nobody wants to admit that a large part of everything they are involved within their personal life is derivative. It was with the British that the rule of law sneaked into our lives as it were. The British gave us the whole package. We built our constitution on western models, bits and pieces from the leavings of others. Who among us thought of Central Banking before the British gave us the Reserve Bank? We did not even have the concept of money of the kind that we were given. We had moneylenders instead: some vicious hybrid types and some large hearted towards widows and suffering people. Always personal, never under law. For there was none to keep or break.

So the British bequeathed to us most things, adjusting with which we have spent a century. Think of the railways, the postage stamp, every industry from steel to paper, even the kind of uniforms public servants wear, from the wig and gown of the judiciary to the dress of convocations in the universi-

ties and colleges, which the British built having first by-passed the *Gurukul* of our tradition. The minutest thing like the red and amber and green of our traffic lights, driving left, and manners on the road which we always dishonour. Indeed a very small part of our life today comes from our own discovering and application. We took them wholesale from foreign sources, without the pain of our own searching and discovery. Since most of these things are not of our own making, we give them only the respect that is due to an interloper in our lives: which is almost none.

In the regime which the British left us, our public behaviour could no longer be assessed personally as coming out of the happy accidents of our family lineage and nurture, but by a brand new concept called *discipline*, which even today we have not quite grasped. We were a modest and extremely well behaved people, pious sounding, courtly, easily distinguished by the personal creativity we brought to bear on our public conduct. This fine behaviour was not the result of shared discipline, but of our personal qualities. This is one of the reasons why we describe individuals in curiously personal terms. We say some one is honest, or is humble, or loves flowers

A very small part of our life today comes from our own discovering and application. We took them wholesale from foreign sources, without the pain of our own searching and discovery.

and babies, as though these characteristics are issues of public importance in assessing a person's true worth. This would be certainly worth mentioning if his behaviour was being assessed exclusively in personal and private terms. In public description, honesty is a discipline; arrogance or crude public behaviour is not the absence of humility but a breach of discipline, which requires certain standards of punishments. Simplicity is not a public virtue. It is your personal attribute. Decorum is a public virtue; simplicity is a moral and ethical value. Simplicity has no public correlates. It is like not eating carrots, or giving up brinjals, or walking barefoot and barebodied. It is lovely and personal.

Yes, law is a troublesome and a meddlesome concept in the freewheeling world to which we

belong-particularly for those in whom custom is deeply ingrained. But it has a certain merit. We can always change the law if we don't like it. It sometimes works. At least the procedure is much more simple than if we wanted to change a custom. And, law tries to help without needing a good family or a fine nurture. It is a pity that it is always imperfect-a mere intermediate stage in a larger evolution. For the time being, the thing called "law" should be deemed to be enough. At least it could be considered to be good enough to cross a road in our cities without being killed, or the feeling that there are some thinking minds somewhere a little above our own station, a sense of safety and belonging, a sense of proper space, and of an ordered existence. For this reason alone perhaps it might be a good thing to have law in some form or the other about most things in life and respect it in lieu of our better family lineage and nurture.

Dr. Raghava R. Menon is an eminent scholar, writer, musicologist and critic. He has authored several books on music. He writes for leading newspapers and journals in the country. Dr. Menon lives in Delhi.

Our main program is to commence an Afforestation project, in the region adjacent to Kadumane Village in Sakleshpur Taluk. This is in keeping with the major objective of contributing towards the welfare and upliftment of the disadvantaged rural community, through an integrated development program, of which afforestation is a major component. The other objectives are the utilization of wasteland and human resources for natural resource generation, in the form of food, fodder, fuel, fertilizer, etc., and valuable non-wood forest produce.

We need the active participation of concerned people from all walks of life. They should commit themselves to environmental causes. There are three main projects of SAVE;

1. Kadumane Main Project (MOOLADHARA) in Sakleshpur,
2. "CITY FOREST" Programme for Bangalore, and
3. 1 million seedlings generation programme for Bangalore.

To seek the involvement of people we have planned a series of awareness programs, including Earth day concerts, vigils, exhibitions etc.



SAVE

For membership details, write to:
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Tel. 584679

*One Vishnusharman shrewdly gleaning
All wordly wisdom's inner meaning,
In these five books the
charm compresses
Of all such books the world possesses.*



It is a said that an ounce of sense contained in the Panchatantra is better than a ton of scholarship. Most of us are familiar with it from our childhood as 'once-upon-a-time' stories and have read them in abridged forms or in comics. Rarely have we encountered a literal translation in verse form. Indeed, these wise verses, often epigrammatic in style, go to make the real character of the Panchatantra. The stories are charming when regarded as pure narrative, but it is the beauty, wisdom and wit of the verses which lift the Panchatantra above the best story books.

The Panchatantra is a 'niti shastra' or textbook of 'niti'. The word 'niti' roughly means the 'wise conduct of life'. It is witty, mischievous and profoundly sane. The word, 'Panchatantra' means, the 'Five Books', the 'Pentateuch'. Each of the five books are independent, consisting of a framing story with numerous, inserted stories, told by one or another of the characters of the main narrative. The device of the framing story is familiar in oriental works, as in the Arabian Nights. The large majority of the actors are animals, who have, of course, a fairly constant character. Thus, the lion is strong, but dull of wit, the jackal, crafty, the heron stupid, the cat, a hypocrite. The animal actors present far more vividly and shrewdly, undeceived and free of all sentimentality, a view, that piercing the humbug of every false ideal, reveals with incomparable wit, the sources of lasting joy. And this is how it happened.....

INTRODUCTION

In the southern country is a city called Maiden's Delight. There lived a king named, Immortal-Power. He was familiar with all the works dealing with the wise conduct of life. His feet were made dazzling by the tangle of rays of light from jewels in the diadems of mighty kings who knelt before him. He had reached the far shore of all the arts that embellish life. This king had three sons. Their names were Rich-Power, Fierce-Power and Endless-power and they were supreme blockheads.

Now when the king perceived that they were hostile to education, he summoned his counsellors and said, "Gentlemen, it is known to you that these sons of mine, being hostile to education, are lacking in discernment. So when I behold them, my kingdom brings me no happiness, though all external thorns are drawn. For there is wisdom in the proverb:

*Of sons unborn, or dead, or fools,
Unborn or dead will do:
They cause a little grief, no doubt;
But fools, a long life through.*

and again:

*To what good purpose can a cow
That brings no calf nor milk be
bent?
Or why beget a son who proves
A dunce and disobedient?*

Some means must therefore be devised to awaken their intelligence."

And they, one after another, replied; "O King, first one learns grammar, in twelve years. If this subject has somehow been mastered, then one masters the books on religion and practical life. Then the intelligence awakens."

But one of their number, a counsellor named Keen, said: "O King, the duration of life is limited, and the verbal sciences require much time for mastery. Therefore let some kind of epitome be devised to wake their intelligence. There is a proverb that says:

*Since verbal sciences have
no final end,
Since life is short, and
obstacles impend,
Let central facts be picked and*

*firmly fixed,
As swans extract the milk
with water mixed.*

"Now, there is a Brahmin here named Vishnusharman, with a reputation for competence in numerous sciences. Entrust the princes to him. He will certainly make them intelligent in a twinkling.

When the king had listened to this, he summoned Vishnusharman and said, "Holy sir, as a favour to me you must make these princes incomparable masters of the art of practical life. In return, I will bestow upon you a hundred landgrants."

And Vishnusharman made this answer to the king, "O king, listen. Here is the plain truth. I am not the man to sell good learning for a hundred landgrants. But if I do not, in six month's time, make the boys acquainted with the art of intelligent living, I will give up my own name. Let us cut the matter short. Listen to my lion roar. My boasting arises from no greed for cash. Besides, I have no use for money; I am eighty years old, and all the objects of sensual desire have lost their charm. But in order that your request may be granted, I will show a sporting spirit with reference to artistic matters. Make a note of the date. If I fail to render your sons, in six month's time, incomparable masters of the art of intelligent living, then His Majesty is at liberty to show me His majestic bare bottom."

When the king, surrounded by his counsellors, had listened to the Brahmin's highly unconventional promise, he was dumbstruck. He entrusted the princes to him, and experienced supreme content.

Meanwhile, Vishnusharman took the boys, went home, and made them learn by heart, five books which he composed and called (i) The Loss of Friends (ii) The Winning of Friends (iii) Crows and Owls (vi) Loss of Gains (v) Ill-considered Action.

These the princes learned, and in six month's time they answered the prescription. Since that day this work on the art of intelligent living, called *Panchatantra*, or the Five Books, has travelled the world, aiming at awakening the intelligence in the young.

THE STORY OF THE LAST EPISODE...

In a city called Growing City, there was a merchant called Strong-Tooth who excelled everyone in cleverness and statecraft. Once, on the occasion of his daughter's wedding, he invited the elite of the town, including the King. Among the guests was Bull, the King's house cleaning drudge, who was audacious enough to take a seat in front of the King's professor. Strong-Tooth threw him out; from that moment onwards, humiliation rankled in Bull's inner soul. He planned revenge. With a well executed device, Bull managed to create antagonism between the King and Strong-Tooth. When Strong-Tooth finally realised that it was all Bull's doing, he apologised to him and Bull made amends.

This story was told by Victor, the Jackal to Lively, the bull, in an effort

to curry favour with Rusty, the Lion-King.

Victor introduced Lively to Rusty, and soon a great friendship grew between them. They spent many hours in close confabulations. Naturally, this estranged the two jackals, Cheek and Victor from the King, on whose spoils they lived. Cheek told Victor that in introducing Lively to the King, he was, in fact, handling live coals. Victor answered that he was right and acknowledged his fault thus:

*The jackal at the ram-fight;
And we when tricked by June
The meddling friend, were
playing
A self-defeating tune.*

"How was that?" asked Cheek. And Victor told three stories in one, called GODLY AND JUNE.

GODLY & JUNE

In a certain district there was a monastery in a secluded spot. In it lived a holy man named Godly, who in course of time acquired a great sum of money by selling finely woven garments, the numerous offerings of the faithful for whom he performed sacrifices. As a result, he trusted no man, and kept his treasure under his arm by night and day. For there is wisdom in the proverb:

*Money causes pain in getting;
In the keeping, pain and fretting;
Pain in loss and pain in spending;
Damn the trouble never ending!*

Now, a rogue named June, who took other people's money from them, observed the treasure under his arm, and reflected: "How am I to take this

treasure from him? In the first place, I cannot pierce the wall of the cell, which is compactly built of solid stone. And I cannot enter the door, which is too high. I will talk to him, win his confidence, and become his disciple, for he will be in my power when I have

*All life is vanity.
Youth slips by like a
mountain torrent.
The days of our life are
like a fire in chaff.
Delights of the flesh are
as the shadow of
a cloud.*



his confidence. As the proverb says:

*None lacking shrewdness flatter well;
None but a lover plays the swell;
No saints are found in judgment
seats;
No clear, straight forward speaker
cheats.*

Having thus made up his mind, he drew near to Godly, uttered the words, "Glory to Shiva. Amen," fell flat on his face, and spoke with deference: "O holy sir! All life is vanity. Youth slips by like a mountain torrent. The days of our life are like a fire in chaff. Delights of the flesh are as the shadow of a cloud. Union with son, friend, servant, wife, is but a dream. All this I discern clearly. What shall I do that I may safely cross the sea of many lives?"

On hearing this, Godly said respectfully: "My son, blessed are you, being thus indifferent to the world in early youth. What says the proverb?"

*'Tis only saints in youth
That can be saints in truth:
Ah, who is not a saint*

When ebbing passions faint?

And again:

*First mind, then body ages;
In case of holy sages:
The body ages first,
Mind never, in the worst.*

And as for your search to find a means of safely crossing the sea of many lives, just listen to this:

*A hangman with his matted hair,
Or serf, or other man through prayer
To holy Shiva, changes caste,
Becomes pure Brahman at the last.*

*Six syllables, a little prayer;
A single blossom resting there
On Shiva's symbol-and on earth
No further pain, no later birth."*

When he had listened to this, June clasped the holy man's feet and said deferentially: "This being so, holy sir, pray do me the favor of imposing a vow." "My son," answered Godly, "I am ready to oblige you. But you must

not enter my cell by night. For renunciation is recommended to ascetics, to you and to me as well. As the proverb puts it:

*Ascetics come to grief through greed;
And kings, who evil counsels heed;
Children through petting, wives
through wine,
Through wicked sons a noble line;
A Brahman through unstudied books,
A character through haunting crooks;
A farm is ruined through neglect;
And friendship, lacking kind respect;
Love dies through absence; fortunes
crash
Through naughtiness; and hoarded cash
Through carelessness or giving rash.*

So after taking the vow, you must sleep in a hut of thatch at the monastery gate."

"Holy sir," said the other, "your

*'Tis only saints in youth
That can be saints in
truth:
Ah, who is not a saint
When ebbing passions
faint?*



prescription is the law of my life. I shall need it in the next world." So, the sleeping arrangements being made, Godly graciously gave him initiation and granted discipleship. June for his part made the holy man very happy by rubbing his hands and feet, bringing writing-paper, and other services. Still, Godly kept his treasure under his arm.

As the time passed in this manner, June reflected: "Dear me! Do what I will, he does not trust me. So shall I kill him with a knife in broad daylight? Or give him poison? Or butcher him like a beast?"

While he was reflecting thus, the son of a pupil of Godly's came from the village, bearing an invitation. And he said: "Holy sir, pray come to my house for the ceremony of the sacred thread." And when Godly heard this he started out with June.

Now, as he travelled, he came to a river, seeing which he took the treasure from under his arm, wrapped it carefully in his patched ascetic robe, worshipped the appropriate gods, and said to June: "June, I must step aside. Please keep careful watch of this robe until I return." With these words he moved away. And as soon as he was out of sight, June seized the treasure and decamped.

THE JACKAL AT THE RAM-FIGHT

Now Godly sat down perfectly carefree, for his disciple's countless virtues had lulled his suspicions. As he rested, he saw a herd of rams, and two of them fighting. These two would angrily draw apart and dash together, their slablike foreheads crashing so that blood flowed freely. This spectacle attracted a jackal whose soul was in the fetters of carnivorous desire, and he stood between the two, lapping up the blood.

When Godly observed this, he thought: "Well, well! This is a dull-witted jackal. If he happens to be between them just when they crash, he will certainly meet death. This inference seems inescapable to me."

Now the next time, being greedy as

ever to lap up the blood, the jackal did not move away. He was caught between the crashing heads, and killed. Then Godly said: "The jackal at the ram-fight," and grieving for him, started to resume his travel.

He returned in no haste, but when he failed to find June, he hurried through the ceremony of purification, then examined his robe. Finding the treasure gone, he fell to the ground in a swoon, murmuring: "Oh, oh! I am robbed." In a moment he came to himself, rose again, and started to scream: "June, June! Where did you go after cheating me? Give me an answer!" With this repeated lamentation he moved slowly on, picking up his disciple's tracks and muttering: "And we, when tricked by June."

To be Continued

In 1924, Arthur W. Ryder, the well known American oriental scholar translated the Panchatantra from Sanskrit to English. It is one of the best of existing translations in any foreign language. The text here translated, dates back from the year 1199 A.D. We are happy to serialise and present the Panchatantra, interspersing verse and prose as translated by Ryder and published by Jaico.

Illustrations: Ripin Kalra

ERRATA

THE EYE, Vol.1, Issue 3, *Conservation-The Future of Our Past*, the photograph of Satyajit Ray was by Mr. Nimai Ghosh. We regret the omission.

Vol.1, Issue 3, refer article, *Conservation Society, Delhi*. Subsequent to its first publication in 1989, the Archeological Survey of India has published a Hindi translation of Y.D.Sharma's, *Delhi and its Neighbourhood*. This is now available at their counters in Janpath, Qutub Minar, and Jantar Mantar in New Delhi. Also, the author has an allergy to the way her name has been spelt! Please note that the right spelling is "Narayani".

Vol 1, Issue 4, refer article, *Evolution of Indian Classical Music*. Dr. Sumati Mutatkar's name has been accidentally omitted. We gratefully acknowledge her as one of the main contributors to this article.



BOOK REVIEW

THE FLYING HORSE OF DHARMES

BY VICTOR ROSNER S.J.

Published By Satyabharati Publications, Ranchi.

SUNIL KUMAR

Impressions about tribal life in India have often suffered from extreme perceptions. One account of tribal life tries to portray a romanticized view of the tribal people. The other extreme is represented by a school of thought which presents a more mundane interpretation. Reality of the tribal situation in India is perhaps somewhere in between these extremes. Nothing could, perhaps, be more rewarding than a first hand exposure to the organization of tribal societies. Since only a few fortunate ones can do so, another option is to rely on an authentic account from those who have spent or are spending a life time in search of tribal truths.

Victor Rosner's book *The Flying Horse of Dharmes* is in the Elvinian mode, an authentic first-hand account, and not carried away by anthropological considerations alone. Since the book relies on the personal experiences of the author, the account is credible, even years after the time that Rosner first penned it. There is, therefore, virtually no diffidence in reviewing this book, which was first published in February 1982.

The tribes of India represent some of the richest forms of civilization. They also inhabit the relatively more resource-rich hinter land across the sub-continent. In spite of the diversities among the distinct sub-cultures of the Angamies of Nagaland, the Mundas of Chotanagpur, the Murias of Bastar, the

Bharias of Pathalkot or the Bheels of Jhabua, there is a common thread which runs across the various tribal communities, in terms of their unpretentious simplicity and responses to the ecological, physical, cultural forces impinging upon the institutional fabric of each community. That these communities have been able to retain, almost entirely, their rites, customs and ceremonies, as indeed their social taboos, over the centuries (even in the wake of onslaughts by industrialisation, urbanisation and all the accompanying ills and evils) is in itself a tribute to the intrinsic strength of their heritage. It is not, however, that these communities have been left behind in any form of social development over the centuries. To view them as such or as people in

tribes of the Chotanagpur area and traces a gamut of emotions from the pangs of birth to the merriment of marriage and, in his fluid style, goes on to portray an array of activities that comprise everyday life such as hunting, falconary, war-ballet and dances. He describes even the finality of death, and what is life, beyond death for a tribal. He takes the reader to the mystical world of spirits, and of witch-finders, to the excitement of firewalking and even to beliefs bordering on the superstitious.

Nothing of consequence among these tribes misses Rosner's keen observation. His years spent in the service of the tribes in the Chotanagpur region come through in the nature of his description. He maintains a first person narrative from his characters and a refreshing style of commentary.



An excerpt:

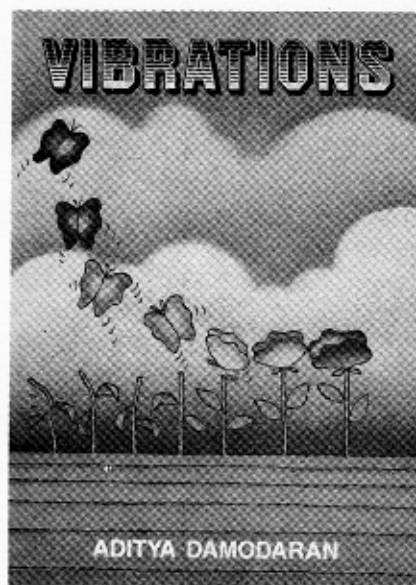
"The Flying Horse has its origins in the antiquity of man. The myth of a horse capable of flying is one from common tribal folklore. We are left to wonder how the Oraons came by their 'Flying Horse'. It is the Horse of Dharmes. The supreme being is known to the Oraons as Dharmes."

some early stages of evolutionary process would be an entirely erroneous and cruel perception. Nor are these communities insulated from the non-tribal ambience. It is their pride in their own tradition which makes the tribal people pick and choose in an extremely selective manner, the influences that they would permit to become part of the dynamics of their culture.

There is no dearth of material available on the little communities which dot the tribal map of India. However, there is very little which would satisfy the academic-researcher-social scientist and the lay person alike. Victor Rosner's work belongs to that rarer genre of literature on the subject. In it, he deals exclusively with the major

One is transported to witnessing Mangra Munda's marriage with the young Soniaro, and all the traditional rituals that the couple go through, with Mangra himself recounting the episodes.

The same facility with which Rosner is able to acquaint his reader with lycanthropy (simply stated, shape-shifting!) is in evidence when he elaborately deals with the five cantos of the Asur Kahani or with the intimacy between the tribal and natural environment. *The Flying Horse of Dharmes* should satisfy the curiosity of the uninitiated, while at the same time serving as an essential reference for the more serious reader. But, a rider. One is not certain whether the book is in print or available.



VIBRATIONS

ADITYA DAMODARAN.
KONARK PUBLISHERS PVT.
LTD.,
A-149, MAIN VIKAS MARG,
DELHI-110092,
PRICE RS.65/-

PARIKSHIT SINGH

*If there is a mischievous God,
He is not hard to find,
For while in deep meditation,
One can see him in the mind.
He smoothens a disciple's path,
Mystic powers is he endowed with.
He strengthened a rat and while
travelling,
On it he does sit.*

Reviewing a poet is jugglery. All you need do is organize your impressions, present them coherently, excerpt a line or two and sound higher-browed than the poet himself and yes, remember to quote Eliot or Arnold.

To capture a butterfly in the mind's eye of imagination is difficult. Especially if it has just emerged and is poised for flight. How is one to confine its easy grace in narrow aesthetics when its spontaneity is only to be

experienced?

Aditya Damodaran is a student of Sardar Patel Vidyalaya, New Delhi, whose maiden volume of poems, *Vibrations*, is out. If you read him like an adult, you may find nothing very remarkable or quotable about him. The language is simple and direct; no fireworks with the imagery. The themes are obvious.

But you might be influenced by the fact that he is just twelve years old. Then you might find his poetry innocent, interesting, finely blended in his images and ideas, spontaneous and quite mature for his age. You will enjoy it fully only if you read it with a mind as fresh as his.

*A flash of time went by,
And I was born,
The only one of my kind.
A flash of time went by again:
I found something amiss,
I saw around my body,
And wondered what was the matter
Why do trees disappear...*

A reviewer is often called upon to be a cynic or a judge and so, may not have the tenderness or delight of a gardener who loves 'the conscious flowers in air' for their own sake. He is an anatomist who would rather pin the butterfly on the dissection-board and describe its parts or stick it in his scrap-book. The best way we can help Aditya is to lay our hands off for he needs no patronising.

*From your time,
I'm centuries earlier;
When there was no crime,
No father or mother,
No mortal bonds,
For there was no you.*

*The night was the time
I used to wake up;
Day was when I would sleep.
There was no rain
For why should I weep
When I'm happy.*

The poet has mused upon a range of themes - preservation of ecology, equality of the sexes, poverty, democ-

racy and the inadequacy of modern education. The imagery is focussed and often, surprisingly fresh. Sculpture is 'made of something as fragile as cloth'. Earth is only a 'showroom' for God the Potter. Death is the 'Final Diagnosis'.

At times, though, the phanopoeia becomes intricate and loses its impact, a pitfall of trying to say too much.

*Life is the pool
The railing your parents,
Death the ocean
And you their enemy man.*

The *Cold Blooded Murder* of a mouse is a clichéd whodunit though otherwise the verse reads well. At odd moments, the rhyme begins to sound contrived. These are technical quibbles only to emphasize that Aditya has to work hard on his craft, now that he has got himself published very early on.

Virginia Woolf had advised young writers not to publish their work till they were thirty. Presumably, the writer would, by then, have reached sufficient maturity and not be upset by adversity or get carried away by success. This is only one side of the story though. Publishing one's poetry is education for the poet too. He could develop well from reader's reactions. The grey areas between expectation and sensitivity are laid bare and the writer confronts himself.

Aditya, we hope, shall grow too, in this world of self-awareness. If he seriously aspires to be a poet, he may have to realize that spontaneity belongs either to the child or the master. Days of childhood may be over for him; now for the mastery. One hopes that his growth will be as spontaneous as his poems.

Today, an artist achieves not only with his medium but by the way in which he carries himself. He must be subtle, slick and know how to sell himself. He says in *Modern Art*,

*For it's called modern art,
It's got age on its side,
And fashion too;*

*It portrays the stains of tomatoes
That spectators threw
At a politician's jarring hypocrisy.
It hits the dust and lies quiet there
And then takes free rides on shoes
Until it evaporates and is no more.*

The art-world is truly *maya*. Nothing holds on long enough; the best are forgotten, the worst are forgiven. Much like an illusory world. To do something creative and worthwhile in such an ambience is the trying task of the artist who has ample freedom today to achieve this as never before. In that sense, the lad is lucky. He has room enough to work his own way, explore his own idiom. We wish him all the best.

The cover and the title seem apt for a maiden attempt and the printing is professional. The volume is certainly worth possessing. If only to sit with at the end of the day and look at the poetic world of a twelve year old.

Parikshit Singh, 24, is a Doctor, doing post graduation in ophthalmology in AIIMS, New Delhi. He did his MBBS from SMS Medical College, Jaipur. His special interest is in reading & writing poetry.

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PARIKSHIT SINGH

Emerging Voices is an anthology brought out by the Poetry Society of India and the British Council Division (India). It gives a cross section of the kind of poetry being written today across our land and abroad by our poets in waiting.

The poems, culled from entries received for an All India Poetry Competition held in June, 1991 organized by the above mentioned agencies, are divided in three sections. Prize winning entries are included in the first section.

The competition, the third of its kind, succeeded in generating enthusiasm among upcoming poets. About 4000 entries were received from about 1250 Indian poets living in different parts of India and abroad. The judges of this competition were Mr. Peter Forbes, Mr. J.P. Das, Mr. Nissim Ezekiel, Mr. Keshav Malik and Dr. Lakshmi Kannan, all well known for their commitment to English poetry. H.K. Kaul has edited the volume.

The poets selected for this volume range in age from eighteen-year old Anasuya Sen Gupta to seventy-six old C. Raju. They come from all walks of life—journalists, executives, lecturers, doctors, students, architects. Which is why their themes and imagery can be seen as indicative of the trends in today's poetry.

The poetry in this anthology is diverse, rich and creative. Raw, at times mystical, at times cynical, individualised, modernistic, it largely deals with a society in flux. Irony and world-weariness are dominant moods, typical of the spirit of the age.

Hemlata Shetty's *Archaka* is bone-thin, weary, recites Vedic verses to placate dead and unlistening gods. Social inequality pains Shampa Sinha whose new twelve-year old housemaid, untrained, deer-like and unashamed of asking too much, is to be tutored to respect "the difference" between her world and that of her employers.

A sense of alienation and strangeness in foreign lands provides a new strain to our world-view. Anita Nair's *Happenings in the London Underground* mirrors the doubt and anxiety that trouble Mr. Patel as he lives through 'times of recession and recycled nostalgia in racist London. Sudeep Sen deliberates in Eliotian metre how the stretching of time will eventually take its toll on New York.'

*In this city where walking means
running,
driving means speeding,
there seem to exist many days in one,
an ironical and oblique efficiency.
But somewhere, somehow, time takes
its toll,
overburdened, overutilized, and
malnourished,
as the tunnels seeping under the
river's belly slowly cave in,
the girders lose their tension like old
dentures, and
the underground rattles with the
passing of every train.
After all, how long can one stretch
time?*

And then the mood changes into reassertion and confirmation. There are attempts to return to one's roots. Krishna Tateneni reaffirms her faith in India and in her mystic diversity:

*Watching the hundreds,
at once one, and at once divided
into colours, into religions, into
divisions,
I am India...*

Meera Nair's dark-coiled images full of incense and mythological fig-

ures portray a Kathakali dancer who loses a little of his face each time he scrapes his mask away.

The fact that out of 47 poets included in this volume, 24 are women shows an increasing level of involvement among them. *Draupadi* and by GJV Prasad and *Another Sita* by Malathi Rao reflect the same awareness.

Ecology, euthanasia, familial discord, the process of creating a poem - these are some other themes that reflect today's idiom and find their way into this anthology. An attempt to review mythology in a new light is NG Satish's *A Plea to Shakuntala* while Imran Merchant prods our sensibilities with *Pieta* where he makes an oblique comment on the Biblical interpretation of the Immaculate Conception.

Free verse is still in its infancy in India. More often than not, it is a rather visionless attempt at imitating some of the more august Western poets of this genre. Only Rajlukshmee Debee Bhattacharya attempts something new with her poem *Punarnava*, incidentally, adjudged the best in the competition. *Punarnava* is a velvet-green me-

dicinal creeper that renews itself and offers a cool decor and healing magic. Here, she uses two languages-Sanskrit and Bengali - to build up her refrain.

Punnonaba" - Punarnava?
In some rainy month, did you decide
to climb up our lichened wall, to
reach
the rusty tin-roof, transforming
its shabbiness into velvet green,
to hang your emerald-pendants
around the neck of our homes.

All knew the perennial Madhvilata;
the fragrant Hasnuhana, queen of the
night.

They gaped when they saw you
running wild on our roof velvet
green, strange, unknown
We shouted with glee, 'It is
Punnonaba....Punarnava.'

Sri Aurobindo in *Future Poetry* has predicted that the poetry of the future will be predominantly spiritual and mantric in quality. Seeds of this spirituality seem to have imbued some of the poems in this collection, although

the mantric intonation has yet to make its presence felt.

The selected poems are original creations in English and not translations from the vernacular. Indian poetry is in a state of transition and is developing a tradition of its own. We hope that as poets one day we shall lead the world. Till such time, attempts like these deserve to be appreciated and encouraged. One hopes that in future, more Indian organisations will come forward to sponsor such events, leading to more publications of good poetry by Indians.

The editing and printing are meticulous. Though one would have preferred the book to be priced less for the young reader. The anthology is especially valuable for those who aspire to write or appreciate English poetry in the country. For this cross section does not contain the works of master craftsman turned famous poet, but the lesser known and talented Indian bard, who sings with joy and anguish of his ever dynamic and changing world.



Chris Madden, WWF

STATE OF THE WORLD 92
A WORLD WATCH
INSTITUTE REPORT ON
PROGRESS TOWARDS A
SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY.
PUBLISHED BY
HORIZON INDIA BOOKS>
PRICE:RS. 200/-



JAYASHREE MENON KURUP

Several attempts are being made at all levels to save the world from an eco-crisis.

There is no doubt that, in the past, the concern for our environment has been sacrificed at the altar of development. The concern for sustainable development forces us to study the unchecked liberty we have hitherto taken with nature and its resources. The World Watch Institute Report analyses the pattern of consumption and production within the paradigm of sustainable development. The Report which forms part of the World Watch Series brought out every year is, as usual, thoroughly researched. It also succeeds, as usual, in attempting to generate environmental awareness and in gathering public support for environmental sanity.

Ozone depletion, global warming and climate change, the loss of plant and animal species and population growth- this year's Report comprises a series of articles in which the authors, all World Watch staffers, point to these and other risks faced by our planet. They also attempt to examine the options open to humanity to deal with the impending disaster.

Biodiversity is life's support system. It is today facing the greatest ever threat by human made forces. "Complex beyond understanding and valuable beyond measure, biological diversity is the total variety of life on earth", writes John C Ryan in his essay *Conserving Biological Diversity*. Ryan draws up a framework for combatting biological impoverishment which is occurring all over the world. And, in

this attempt, he lays stress on both modern and indigenous conservation systems.

Energy is very critical to all development. Christopher Flavin stresses the necessity of a "vision of a sustainable energy economy". As the fossil fuel age brings us ever closer to ecological catastrophe, there is need to take a look at our energy future.

Some of the other articles in the book are *Shaping Cities* by Marcia D Lowe, *Mining the Earth* by John E Young, *Improving Women's Reproductive Health* by Jodi L Jacobson. Michael Renner in *Creating Sustainable Jobs in Industrial Countries* writes on the employment prospect in a sustainable economy - one that does not consume the natural resources and systems on which it depends.

Finally, the book points to an emerging international cooperation to restore the world's abused environment. "Central to the task of strengthening global environmental governance is reform of the vast UN system"

writes Hilary F French in *Strengthening Global Environmental Governance*.

The Environmental Revolution, now in its early stages must succeed. We must begin to see ourselves again as a part of nature rather than apart from nature. This calls for change in individuals, in society, in Government policy formulation and in corporate decision making. We must realise that technology alone cannot solve environmental problems and that we have to use all our ingenuity to find solutions which combine the best of the old practices with the benefit that modern science and technology can offer. John C Ryan is of the opinion that, "the survival of protected areas depends ultimately on the support of local people".

This widely acclaimed Report is translated into 23 languages and is now accorded semi-official status by national governments, UN agencies and international development institutes. This year's report was brought out before the Rio Summit, and must have served as a useful reference material for the participants. Already, the State of the World series is recommended course study material in many universities in the west. Perhaps, it is time our institutions of learning did the same. An Indian organisation, Gandhi Shanti Pratishtan, brings out an entirely voluntary effort *On Our Environment* - a splendidly produced work. It goes without saying that all those who are concerned about environment must help in disseminating these issues of crucial concern.

ESSAY COMPETITION

TREES FOR LIFE, a non-profit organisation, invites essays on *Save And Protect The Environment* from school and college students. The essays should be real life stories of about 5000 words, and should be connected with trees, water, forests etc. Students should forward their essays through the Principal of their school or the Head of Department in college to:

Dr. M.L. Dewan, Advisor,
 Trees For Life, N 44, Panchshila park, New Delhi-110017.
 Essays should be sent in latest by 30th December, 1992.
 Three prizes are offered: Rs.2000, Rs.1000 and Rs.500.

WHEN THE TOURISTS FLEW IN....

*The Finance Minister said
"It will boost the Economy
The dollars will flow in".*

*The Minister of the Interior said
"It will provide full
and varied employment
for all indigenes".*

*The Minister of culture said
"It will enrich our life...
contact with other cultures
must surely
improve the texture of living".*

*The man from the Hilton said
"We will make you a second Paradise:
for you it is the dawn
of a glorious new beginning".*

*When the tourists flew in
our people
metamorphosed into
a grotesque carnival*

a two-week sideshow

*When the tourists flew in
our men put aside
their fishing nets
to become waiters
our women became whores*

*When the tourists flew in
what culture we had went out the
window
we traded our customs
for sunglasses and pop
we turned sacred ceremonies
into ten-cent peep shows*

*When the tourists flew in
local food became scarce
prices went up
but our wages stayed low*

*When the tourists flew in
we could no longer
go down to our beaches*

*the hotel manager said
"Natives defile the sea-shore".*

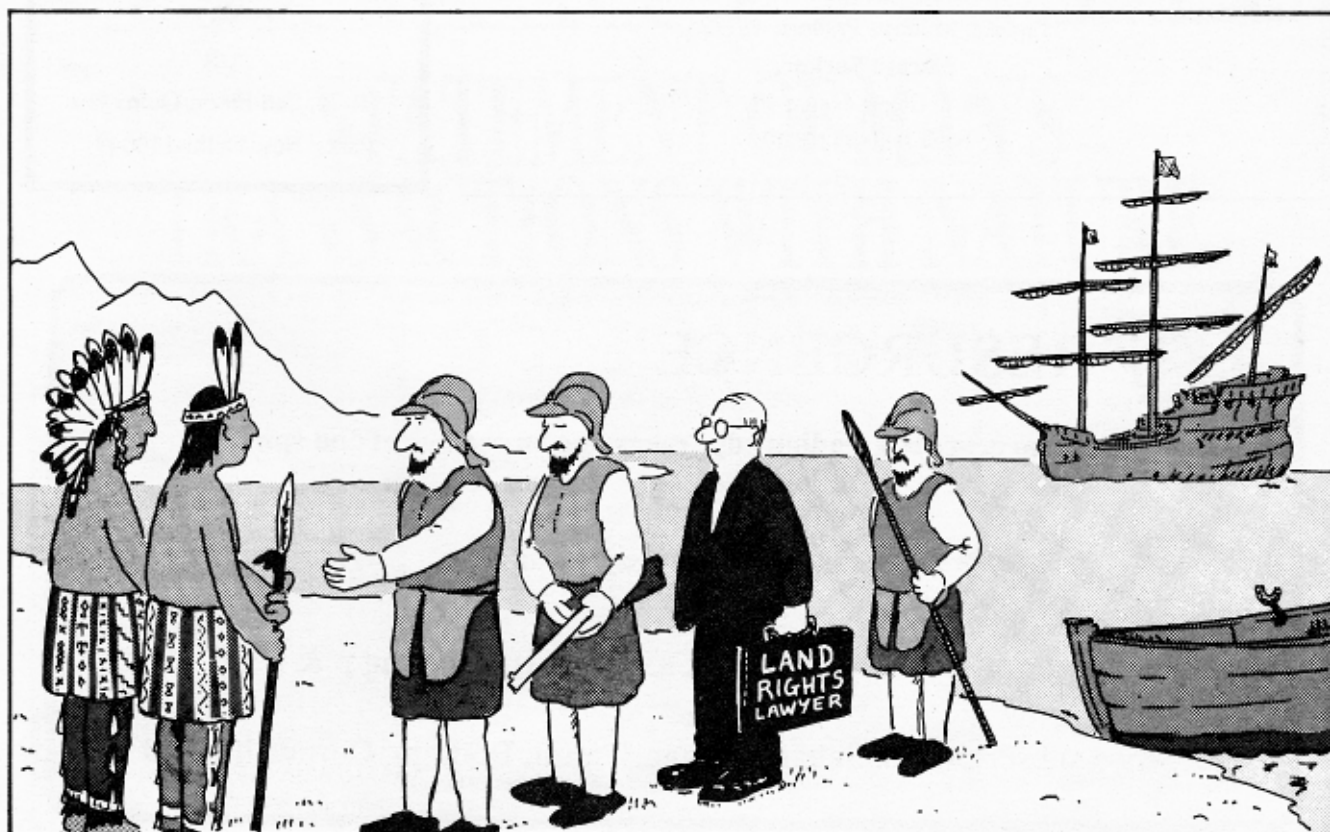
*When the tourists flew in
the hunger and the squalor
were preserved
as a passing pageant
for clicking cameras-
a chic eye-sore*

*When the tourists flew in
we where asked
to be "side-walk ambassadors"
to stay smiling and polite
to always guide
the "lost" visitor...*

*If we could only tell them where
we really want them to go!*

C. Rajendra

*Suggestion: "Tourism" should be
substituted by the word "Pilgrimage"*



Chris Madden, WWF

APPEAL.

The tribals and peasants of Eastern Hoshangabad District (Madhya Pradesh), under the banner of the KISAN MAZDOOR SANGHATAN and SAMATA SANGHATAN have faced extremely hostile reactions regarding the questions of land and forest rights and the eradication of untouchability. Wanton destruction of personal property, grievous physical injury and denial of access to forest and cultivable land are denying food and work to many villagers. Consequently, the Sanghatan has found it necessary to step up rallies, village meetings and discussions in order to keep up morale and consolidate networking. The sudden costs of legal action against many members have made fund raising an emergency activity. The poverty of most of the villagers means that local fund raising can only meet a part of the targeted amount. While half of this will go to meet legal costs, the rest would be used to stock and run two reading-cum-discussion rooms. In view of all this, the Sanghatan requests you to contribute generously.

Contact:

Sadhana Saxena,
C/O Eklavya, Sandia Road,
Piparia, Madhya Pradesh-461775.

Surajit Sarkar,
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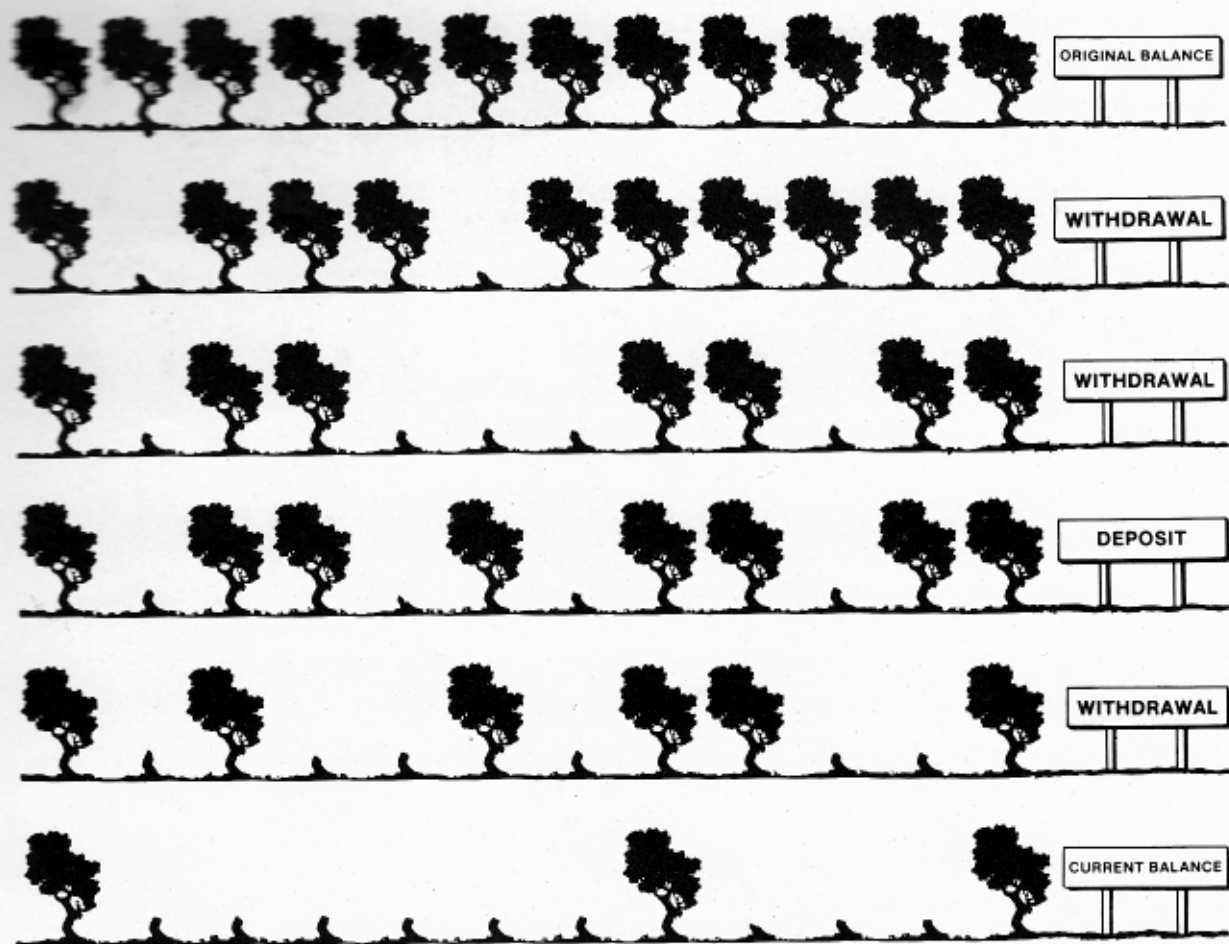
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